

# ***FOUR MEN & a DOG***

*Four Men & a Dog* made a name for themselves with their eclectic and vivacious blend of traditional Irish music with a wide spectrum of other genres, including Southern rock, jazz, bluegrass, polka, country swing, and even salsa. The band made its debut performance as a band at Murphy's Bar, Dungiven, County Derry, in 1990 before going on to steal the show at the *Belfast Folk Festival* later that year, with a high-energy approach that combines furious traditional dance tunes with irreverent new music and inimitable covers.

*Barking Mad*, their debut album from Cross Border Media, snagged an award for *Album of the Year* from Folk Roots magazine in 1991, marking the first time that an Irish group had ever won that prize. Four Men & a Dog's music is enthusiastic and infectious. During live shows it is also spontaneous, since band members do not rehearse. The name stems from the nickname of its original vocalist, Mick, "the Black Dog" Daly. Other original members include percussionist *Gino Lupari*, fiddler *Cathal Hayden*, *Donal Murphy* on accordion, with *Gerry O'Conner*, replacing Daly on vocals and Gerry O'Conner added as banjo.

Recently the band has performed for *North Texas Irish Festival* in Dallas Texas in March 2009 to wild approval. The band has performed for such great programs as *Edmonton Folk Festival* and *Celtic Fest Chicago*. The good folks at Edmonton have proclaimed the live show as one of the best they have seen...*ever* ! In fact, every US presenter repeats that same litany about a Four Men & a Dog show. One presenter perhaps expressed this best when he said "the band gets it, they not only know how to play perfect traditional Irish music, they also know it's also about entertaining an audience"....

## ***The Band.....***

### **Cathal Hayden**



Cathal comes from Pomeroy in *County Tyrone*, and area steeped in traditional Irish music. From an early age, the young Hayden learned and played music with his father and other musicians in the area. His first instrument was the tenor banjo and with this he went on to win All-Ireland championships at all age levels. Cathal then turned to the fiddle and within a year of starting he became the All-Ireland champion on the instrument. During these formative years Cathal spent a lot of time with Arty McGlynn and this led him to record his first solo album about 12 years ago.

*Handed Down* featured the music that had been passed down to him and demonstrated his unique trademark style of playing to the full. In September 1991, Cathal was the catalyst in the formation of *Four Men and a Dog*, a group that has since gone on to establish themselves as one of the top Irish traditional bands of all time.

## Gino Lupari



Gino Lupari from Magherafelt in County Derry has been described as the "god of the Bodhran" which he wields with keen dexterity, but he is best known as the comic front man of the band.

He also does a share of singing. Gino is the heart and soul of the band and has the dual distinction of being one of the finest and the largest Bodhran-player. Without exaggeration, Gino Lupari is one of the *finest Bodhran players* around. His style of playing has been a major influence on some of the great young players.

Gino is an experienced session musician. He works regularly with the top artists in the Irish music scene, sessioning with the likes of Sinead O'Connor, touring and recording with Beware of the Dog and the Liz Doherty Band, hosting regular gigs in London and still finding time to slot in the occasional TV appearance.

## Donal Murphy

Donal Murphy was born in Birmingham, England, and moved with his family to Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick, Ireland, in 1975.

He started playing music at the tender age of eight years, starting first on the tin whistle. But soon he realized that he was destined to follow in his father's footsteps, and so took up his first accordion. It was a 'Hohner Black Dot', and he says it was the best present that "Santa Claus" ever brought! He progressed rapidly, and before long *won All-Ireland titles* in Accordion, Melodeon and group competitions.

With the accordion, and the musical heritage of 'Sliabh Luachra', Donal is one of the foremost and most dazzling exponents of the great style of music from this region.



He toured Ireland, England, America, Sardinia, Seville and Japan with Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann. On one of these trips, he became acquainted with Cathal Hayden (fiddle) and Brian McGrath (banjo). Together in August 1990, they formed the now renowned 'Tour Men & a Dog'. Their album, *'Barking Mad'*, which was released in 1991, was voted *Best Folk Album of the Year* in Hot Press Magazine.

One of the highlights of Donal's musical career came in the summer of 1998 when Michael Flatley invited him to play in the premiere of "Feet of Flames" in Hyde Park, London. He is also a member of traditional powerhouse "Sliabh Notes" along with Tommy O'Sullivan and Paddy Keenan.

## Kevin Doherty



Kevin Doherty, from Co. Donegal in Ireland's northwest corner, first took up the guitar in his mid-teens. In the subsequent years Kevin, with a clutch of self penned songs, played with several local bands and on the periphery of the thriving Donegal traditional music scene.

The undoubted highlight of Kevin's time with Four Men & a Dog was a chance meeting in Norway with *Levon Helm*; singer/drummer with legendary Dylan sidekicks and legends of American music. As a result of a late night laced with songs and stories, an immediate friendship was struck up, and Four Men & a Dog were invited to Helm's recording studios in Woodstock. Two of Four Men & a Dog's albums, "Dr A's Secret Remedies" and "Long Roads" were recorded in Woodstock. Kevin's songwriting abilities meanwhile were not going unnoticed.

Most notably, Mary Black recorded "Donegal Breeze" for her Circus album of 1996. On a trip to Woodstock in early spring, Doherty met up with old friends, The Band, and once more where Kevin provided the song "Don't Wait" and some backing vocals for their album "Jubilation" which was released in September 1998.

"Doherty has a finely attuned ear for the modern beat poetry of isolation: songs such as Embrace Me and Paradise highlight how good the Donegal man can be when he has the bit between his teeth" - *The Sunday Times*.

## Gerry O'Conner

Described by many as the *best four-string banjoist* in the history of Irish music, Gerry lets creativity take him where it wants to.

He's been doing this for some time now, and in the process has collected a great army of admirers not only in Ireland but also around the world. Described by *Irish Music Magazine* as a "*banjoist extraordinaire*", O'Connor has developed a phenomenal technique on the tenor banjo, which sometimes gives the impression that there are perhaps three or four clones of the man all playing at the same time. In the tradition of the O'Connor family,

Gerry was presented with a fiddle even before he was old enough to hold it properly. His father and uncles were all fiddle players. "The fiddle I got was too big for me and I couldn't manage it at all," He says, "But there was more to it than that. I wanted to be a bit different, sure I loved the music but I wanted to make a sound that was different from the fiddle." It was that desire that lead him to the banjo after hearing a player from Limerick play at the Barge Inn in Garry Kennedy. O'Conner instantly fell in love with the bright, rippling sound and had at last discovered the vehicle that would allow him to make an enormous contribution to the development of Irish music.



Gerry O'Connor's music has been featured on the BBC Series Tacsi and he has appeared as a guest on over 12 albums by artists such as Gordon Duncan and Niamh Parsons.