

When somebody says "Irish music", what springs into your mind? Perhaps U2 or other pop and rock artists. Or maybe you imagine a traditional Irish music "session", a group of musicians gathered in a pub, playing tunes on their fiddles, whistles and banjos. There is no strict boundary between traditional folk and popular rock music. Read about bands who approached Irish music in different ways – but all helped to bring it into the spotlight.



Photo courtesy of Warner Music UK, Ltd.

When The Pogues started playing, traditionalists were shocked, others thrilled.

The Pogues Rebels, punks, poets

London, the beginning of the 1980s. The signs declaring "No blacks, no dogs, no Irish are allowed" (a common thing in the 1950s and 1960s) were gone from the windows of London **boarding houses**. But the **attitude** towards the Irish was still negative. The IRA placed bombs in the city and made it scared. Celebrating Irish culture was viewed as unusual, even provocative. Yet many Irish families moved to London, **seeking better fortune** than could be found in their native Ireland.

Shane MacGowan came from one such family. Having grown up in the Irish countryside, he felt a strong **bond** to Irish tradition. He was also an active participant in the London punk scene and frequently attended shows by bands like The Sex Pistols and The Clash. After experimenting with playing punk rock, he got together with several of his London friends, both British and Irish. They decided to play Irish music with punk energy and prove that it is no less lively and **vigorous** than rock. The band, soon to be named The Pogues, was born.

They began by playing traditional songs, especially the **rowdier** ones, often in extremely fast versions. They used traditional instruments (**tin whistle**, banjo, accordion), but made them sound as loud as any rock band. Their gigs were very wild, with the band members appearing drunk on stage, screaming, and one of them **bashing** his head with a **beer tray**.

MacGowan quickly began to write original songs. In his lyrics he expressed the feelings of Irishmen living in London, **vividly** described the harsh life on the

Irish music in the spotlight

streets, commented on politics and at the same time brought **heartfelt** poetic qualities to his slow ballads.

The band caused controversy because of their anti-establishment attitude, wild lifestyle, and also because of the band name. When it was found out that the original name Pogue Mahone means 'kiss my **backside**' in Irish Gaelic, they had to shorten it to the less **offensive** The Pogues. However, their energy, rebelliousness and **catchy** songs **appealed** to young audiences, and soon even critics recognized their masterly songwriting and skillful playing.

Nevertheless, troubles were **accumulating** within the band. The singer and main songwriter MacGowan had increasing problems with drinking and drugs; sometimes he annoyed his bandmates by not appearing for gigs. Finally, he left the band at the beginning of the 1990s, and a few years later, the band **split up**. In 2001, the band reunited and since then they have been touring and playing to sold-out arenas.

Perhaps no other band has **contributed** to popularizing traditional Irish music for rock audiences as much as The Pogues. Their most famous song, "Fairytale of New York" (an unusual Christmas ballad, describing the lost illusions of a couple, and partly taking place in a **drunk tank**), has been repeatedly voted the best

modern Christmas song by various media. They have inspired many other groups (Flogging Molly, Dropkick Murphys, etc.) to follow in their footsteps. Although they celebrate their 25th anniversary this year, they remain popular even among young people who weren't born when The Pogues began playing.

(<http://www.pogues.com>)
Zuzana Pernicová (CR)

→ Vocabulary

- signs declaring** [samz dɪ'kle:ɪŋ] - nápisy hlásající
to be allowed [ə'laʊd] - mít povolený vstup
boarding house [bo:diŋ] - penzion
attitude ['ætɪtju:d] - postož
seeking better fortune ['fɔ:t[ʃ]u:n] - za lepším živobytím
bond [bɒnd] - pouto, vazba
vigorous ['vɪg(ə)rəs] - rázný, energický
rowdy ['raʊdi] - drsný
tin whistle [tɪn 'wɪs(ə)l] - kovová píšťala
to bash [bæʃ] - tlouct, mlátit
beer tray [tɹeɪ] - pivní táč
vividly ['vɪvɪdli] - živě
heartfelt ['hɑ:tfeɪt] - upřímný, prociťený
backside [bæk'saɪd] - zadek
offensive [ə'fensɪv] - urážlivý
catchy [kætʃi] - chytlavý
to appeal to (sb.) [ə'pi:l] - přitahovat (někoho), líbit se (někomu)
to accumulate [ə'kjʊ:mjələt] - hromadit se
to split up - rozpadnout se
to contribute [kən'trɪbjʊ:t] - přispět
drunk tank (AmE, slang) - záchytka



However different The Dubliners (pictured) and The Pogues may seem at the first sight, they enjoyed performing together. Their joint rendition of the folk song "The Irish Rover" reached the UK Top Ten chart in 1987.

The Dubliners – an Irish legend

One of the most legendary Irish bands, The Dubliners, started in a Dublin pub in 1962. They named themselves after a book by James Joyce, a collection of short stories about various people living in Dublin. After several years of playing in folk clubs and at festivals, their **breakthrough** came very **unexpectedly**. A pirate radio station got interested in their recording of "Seven Drunken Nights" (a humorous song about a woman who **cheats on** her permanently drunk husband). Suddenly, a traditional song was played on the radio **alongside** such

popular rock bands as The Beatles – and it even reached UK pop charts. The Dubliners were on their way to fame.

They spent the following decades touring all over the world and recording albums. Although they performed many slow ballads, they are best-known for their **renditions** of pub songs. Rebel songs, **praising** Irishmen who **dared** to revolt against English rule, also had a place in their repertoire. Their music sounded very fresh and lively, creating the **feel** of a spontaneous pub session even if it was performed at a concert hall.

The **line-up** of The Dubliners has changed over the years, but the band hasn't lost their **vigour** and they still tour regularly – more than 40 years after their story started.
(<http://www.geocities.com/toeye/dubliners>)
Zuzana Pernicová (CR)

Read about another famous Irish band, The Chieftains, in "brain teaser".

Molly Malone

"Molly Malone", a permanent part of The Dubliners' repertoire, is one of the most popular Irish folk songs and it is considered the unofficial **anthem** of Dublin. It tells a simple story of a girl who was selling fish in Dublin streets and died young of an illness. Nobody knows if it's based on a real person; nevertheless, people **honoured** Molly by **erecting** a statue of her in Grafton Street, the main shopping street in Dublin.

TASK

Read the lyrics of the song and fill in the missing words with the help of the hints in the brackets.

MOLLY MALONE

In Dublin's fair, (= big town) where the girls are so, (= beautiful)
I first set my on sweet Molly Malone, (= the organs of sight)
As she wheeled her **wheelbarrow**,
Through streets broad and narrow,
Crying, "**Cockles and mussels**, alive alive oh!"

"Alive-alive-oh,
Alive-alive-oh,"
Crying "**Cockles and mussels**, alive alive oh."

She was a **fishmonger**,
And sure 'twas no, (= surprise)
For so were her mother and father before,
And they each wheeled their barrow,
Through streets broad and narrow,
Crying, "**Cockles and mussels**, alive, alive oh!"

(chorus)

She died of a, (= high body temperature)
And no one could her, (= rescue)
And that was the of sweet Molly Malone. (= the opposite of "beginning")
Now her wheels her barrow, (= spirit of a dead person)
Through streets broad and narrow,
Crying, "**Cockles and mussels**, alive, alive oh!"

(chorus)

Solution on p. 3

→ Vocabulary

breakthrough ['breɪkθruː] - průlom
unexpectedly [ʌnɪk'spektɪdli] - nečekaně
to cheat on (sb.) [tʃiːt] - podvádět (někoho)
alongside [ə'lɒŋ'saɪd] - spolu s, vedle
rendition [rɛn'dɪʃ(ə)n] - provedení, verze
to praise [praɪz] - oslavovat
to dare [deə] - odvážit se
feel [fiːl] - dojem
line-up - obsazení
vigour ['vɪɡə] - energie, elán
anthem ['ænthəm] - hymna
to honour ['ɒnə] - poctít
to erect [ɪ'rekt] - vztyčit
wheelbarrow ['wiːlbærəʊ] - trakař
cockles and mussels ['kɒk(ə)lz 'mʌs(ə)lz] - srdcovky a slávky (druhy mořských škeblí)
fishmonger ['fɪʃmʌŋɡə] - prodavač ryb



The statue shows Molly as a young woman in a long dress, pushing a wheelbarrow loaded with baskets of fish.