

San Gabriel Valley Tribune

Paddy's Pig has a wee bit of the Irish

By Michelle Mills, Staff Writer

Posted: 12/03/2008 02:17:01 PM PST

The Los Angeles-based band Paddy's Pig offers up a selection of Irish and Celtic music with a slight twist. Their sound isn't solid folk nor is it a punk/Irish meld, instead it falls somewhere in the middle. The group appears at the Coffee Gallery Backstage in Altadena on Wednesday.

"We like to be traditional and acoustic, but we like to have a lot of energy," Mike Flanagan said. "We share some similarities with both, but we're not like either."

Flanagan supplies vocals, mandolin, guitar and tin whistle for the group, joined by fellow Silver Lake resident Missy Gibson, vocals and percussion, Long Beach guitarist Martin Beal and drummer/percussionist Damon Pipitone of South Pasadena.

Gibson's vocals also serve to separate the band from other groups as well, as the majority of women in the genre are fiddlers. She often receives compliments for her unabashed offerings of typically male-voiced tunes.

"I'm pretty feisty," Gibson said. "I have a big voice, (and) a low voice. I'm not shy, so I think that helps. For a pub band, we're raucous."

The lineup must be working because Paddy's Pig is in constant demand throughout Southern California at pubs and bars, as well as Irish fairs. Their most current album, "Maple & Wine," was released in July and has been garnering airplay on Celtic Radio (www.celticradio.net, select Highlander Radio).

A mutual friend introduced Gibson and Flanagan nine years ago, thinking they would work well together musically. From there, Paddy's Pig was formed and, although other members have come and gone, the two have kept the band consistent.

Much of Paddy's Pig's repertoire is based on song requests they receive at shows, but recently they have begun writing original music. Gibson and

Flanagan penned two of the tunes that appear on "Maple & Wine."

"We've been playing this music for seven, eight years before we thought about writing anything," Flanagan said. "We had this large stockpile of chord progressions, grooves and feels and melodic ideas and all these things are bouncing around in our heads when we start to write something."

"In a lot of Irish songs, they tend to do a lot of great storytelling," Gibson said. "They're told so simply and so perfectly. I always think they're so well-crafted, so it was a challenge. I'm not sure if I succeeded, but I tried to focus on what's the story."

The two also write for television and film together and created the songs for "The Next Big Thing," a musical performed at Arts/Works Theatre in Santa Monica over the summer. Plus they share other projects, Breech, an indie rock outfit, and Nellie Bly, an alternative country/indie folk band.

Flanagan began playing piano in second grade, moving on to clarinet, saxophone, guitar, bass, mandolin and a long list of other instruments. He graduated from Cal State Long Beach.

"I almost got a math degree," he said. "I was sitting in class near the end of graduating at 8 in the morning, some really weird, obscure, abstract math class and I had this epiphany, 'I hate this. It's horrible. What am I doing here?' So I backtracked, ending up with a liberal studies degree and thinking that maybe teaching wouldn't be such a bad thing."

Today the only teaching Flanagan does is guitar lessons, otherwise he does recording production and engineering and computer work.

Gibson formed her first band, the Black Widows, in third grade.

"My mom was a musician and my dad was a singer," Gibson said. There was "a lot of music in the

Paddy's Pig has a wee bit of the Irish

[continued]

house. . . I played piano as a kid and then I played saxophone, but I failed miserably at both."

She has studied voice since age 12 and was in bands throughout high school and college. She has a theater degree from Wayne State University in Detroit and makes ends meet by singing in commercials, such as ETrade, Amtrak, State Farm Insurance and Career Builder.

Paddy's Pig member Marty Beal helped form the band, left it and returned six months ago. Damon Pipitone has been keeping rhythm for the band for two years.

Paddy's Pig will be playing an afternoon show on New Year's Eve at Black Watch Pub in Upland; the group appears regularly at Casey's Irish Bar in downtown Los Angeles.

"We're a lot of fun and we're nice folks," Gibson said.

"When we play shows, sometimes the people are just at a bar and don't seem interested," Flanagan said. "Then one of those people will come up to you and say, 'I'm from Dublin and it's so great to hear a band play these traditional songs with the energy and passion that I'm not used to seeing in American bands. It's like being back home, thank you.'"

"It makes us feel so good," he added.

PADDY'S PIG

8 p.m. Wednesday

Coffee Gallery Backstage

2029 N. Lake Ave., Altadena

\$15

(626) 398-7917

www.coffeegallery.com

www.breech.net/paddys_pig

www.myspace.com/paddyspigla

http://www.whittierdailynews.com/ci_11129751