

The Irish Rovers - Biography

For more than four decades, THE IRISH ROVERS have charmed and entertained audiences around the world with their exciting stage shows.

"Throughout the years, these international ambassadors of Irish music have maintained their timeless ability to deliver a rollicking, rousing performance of good cheer- one that will soon have you singing and clapping along. Their songs have become anthems of revelry and joy among generation after generation of fans." -Belfast Telegraph

This year, The Irish Rovers celebrate 45 years of music since their first recording, with a new CD, Gracehill Fair (*Rover Records*), and new DVD, "Home in Ireland", filmed entirely on-location in their homeland of Northern Ireland.

The story of the Irish Rovers starts in Canada, where the 16-year old George Millar and 23-year old Jim Ferguson, both new emigrants from N. Ireland, met in Toronto at an Irish function. They ended up singing together 'til dawn; and so the Irish Rovers were launched. They performed as a duo until George's cousin, Joe Millar, immigrated to Canada the following year. Joe, who played button-key accordion and harmonica, and also sang traditional ballads, was recruited as he stepped off the plane. After several months of engagements around Ontario, the trio made their way to Calgary, Alberta, where they joined forces with George's brother, Will Millar. The four Rovers then headed off to "Americay"-- landing in at the famous folk club - "The Purple Onion" - in San Francisco, where they ended up headlining for an unprecedented 22 sold-out weeks. The folk clubs of California became the learning grounds for the young Rovers, and (through old-fashioned hard work and a wee bit of Irish luck) they were offered a recording contract with Decca Records.

Their debut album, appropriately titled, "The First of The Irish Rovers", generated enough excitement to warrant another album, from which came the million selling single "The Unicorn", the band's signature song to this

day. At this time, the addition of Wilcil McDowell, an old friend from Ireland, enhanced their sound and the legendary line up was formed. In 1968, The Irish Rovers were named Canada's, "Folk Group of the Year", and the following year, received a Grammy nomination for "Folk Performance of the Year".

Through the 1970's and early 80's, the Rovers brought their magic to television with a weekly series for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and later, another series on the Global Network in conjunction with Ulster Television in Ireland which was syndicated around the world. In 1980's, The Rovers once again soared to the top of the pop and country charts with "Wasn't That a Party". This real-life celebration was written by their friend, U.S. folk singer Tom Paxton, after he witnessed one of the band's famous post-show parties. It has gone on to become an international anthem of good cheer. Hot on the heels of that success, the band recorded "Grandma Got Run-Over By A Reindeer", which not only became an immediate seasonal anthem, but which led to the creation of the much loved IRISH ROVERS' HOLIDAY PARTY show that tours every November and December in the US and Canada.

They lads have represented Canada at no less than five world Expos, and in recognition for a quarter century of contributions to the International music world, The Irish Rovers won the Performing Rights Organization's (PROCAN) 'Harold Moon Award'.

The Irish Rovers continue to perform in theatres around the world, with original members George Millar, and Wilcil McDowell. Will Millar left the group in 1994, and sadly Jimmy Ferguson passed away in 1997. In 2005 Joe Millar also retired from the band, while his son, Ian took up the ranks. Both John Reynolds and Sean O'Driscoll have been playing with the band for nearly 20 years, and drummer, Fred Graham has been touring with the lads since 2007. The Irish Rovers are still passionate about performing and will continue to tour and entertain their legions of fans. Like the Unicorn, the Rovers are legendary and magical, and a good time is guaranteed for

