

Echo Arts & Lifestyle

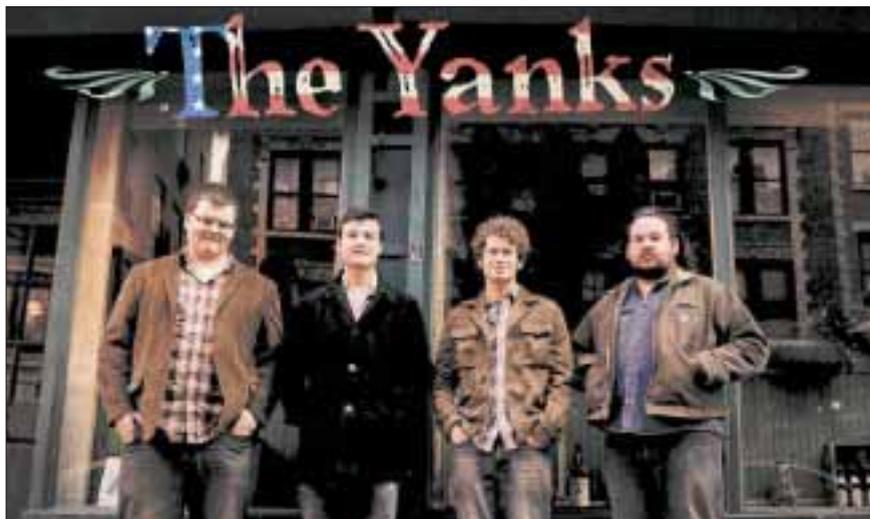
Top young stars unite as joyful Yanks

Traditional Music /
By Daniel Neely

Ask the question “who are the top young trad musicians in America today?” and you’d get a short list of players, some of whom are very well known, others whom are maybe less so. Of those names, Dylan Foley (fiddle), Isaac Alderson (flute, uilleann pipes), Dan Gurney (button accordion) and Sean Earnest (guitar, bouzouki) would stand out as among the very best. Together, however, they’ve formed “The Yanks,” a new band that has just released an eponymous debut CD. It is an outrageously good collection of instrumental Irish music that is already starting to attract attention from trad lovers throughout the U.S. and Ireland.

The Yanks have been playing together since April 2011, but they assembled last summer during the Catskills Irish Arts Week (which seems to be a crucible for good, young bands – NicGaviskey, anyone?), tore themselves away from the craic and recorded an album in what was literally a “shack” outside East Durham’s Blackthorne Resort. With the engineering help of John Walsh, the guidance and encouragement of Josh Dukes and the cool but intermittent use of the shack’s air conditioner, the guys were able to lay down the basic tracks for this album in a mere two days.

The results are outstanding. The four Yanks play together in a very joyful way and bring a heavy, driving swing to their music. Of the album’s fourteen tracks, the full group is featured on ten. Top cuts include the “Gooseberry Bush/...” reel set (Alderson’s smart use of his pipes’s regular articulates really nicely with the double stops Foley puts into his fiddling); “Stack of Barley / ...” (a hornpipes and reel set with a lovely



bounce) and; “The Mountain Top / ...” (Alderson’s flute playing here is terrific, as is Earnest’s backing – very smart stuff from both).

The album’s balance is given over to solo showcases, Foley on “Séan Ó Duibhir A’ Ghleanna / ...”; Gurney (who always has such a great, relaxed feel to his playing) on “Up and Away in the Morning / ...”; Earnest on “An Sean-duine Dóite / ...” and Alderson (who pays lovely tribute to Seamus Ennis; thanks Joey Abarta for the heads up) on “Jenny’s Welcome to Charlie / ...”. These tracks reveals each musician’s high performance standard and are highlights in themselves – they complement the full group tracks well.

The album’s overall sound is excellent, thanks to Dublin-based Sean Keegan (seankeegan.ie), who handled the album’s mixing and mastering.

This CD aside, last year was an eventful one for each of the Yanks. Foley (dylanfoley.com) released his debut CD “Hup!” (which was not only received warmly in the U.S., but got extensive airplay in Ireland, especially on RTÉ’s Raidió na Gaeltachta) and came in second in the All-Ireland senior

fiddle competition (after a recall!). Gurney (dangurney.net) also released a brilliant debut album, “Traditional Irish Music on the Button Accordion,” and saw his music event video streaming company Concert Window continue to grow. Alderson (www.isaacalderson.com), who has worked with acts such as

Eileen Ivers and Immigrant Soul, Runa, Celtic Crossroads, and Cherish the Ladies’s Gráinne Murphy, spent much of the time touring with Comas, while Earnest (seanearnest.com), who is originally from Philadelphia and who has toured with Téada (2009) and the McPeake family (2010-present) has been working on projects with the Kyle Carey Trio

as well as with Damien Connolly and is a fixture on the NYC session scene.

With great playing and smart, down-to-earth arrangements, this new Yanks album is a brilliant debut that features some of the best young trad players you’ll find anywhere. It’s definitely worth having. Learn more at yanksband.com.

Incidentally: as I get set to submit this article, I’ve learned that the Yanks’s album – which was just released today, March 1 through the Bandcamp.com website – is sitting at number two overall on that site’s sales chart, behind only the new album from Ghostface Killah, who is best known for being a member of the infamous rap group Wu Tang Clan. This is a major achievement from any trad group and deserves to be pointed out. Congrats, guys.

Finally: three-quarters of the Yanks (Gurney, Foley and Earnest) will be on a national tour, March 3 to the 22. Two of the concerts, March 9 and 17, will be broadcast online at ConcertWindow. For more info on how to view, visit concertwindow.com/tour.

Corbett began new era of prizefighting

By Jay Mwamba
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In the pantheon of Celtic warriors, the figure of James J. Corbett looms larger than most heavyweight prizefighters with roots in the Auld Sod.

This Friday, Corbett’s story comes to the big screen with the U.S. premiere of “The Gentleman Prizefighter,” Andrew Gallimore’s documentary on the former heavyweight champion of the world.

Narrated by Oscar-winning actor Liam Neeson, the film will be screened 7:30 p.m. at the Tribeca Cinema (54 Varick St., Downtown Manhattan), as part of the Craic Festival. Tickets are \$20 and include the film and an after party (Tullamore Dew & Heineken open bar 9 p.m. – 11 p.m.). Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

The son of Irish immigrants, Gentleman Jim Corbett was, as noted by boxing historian Mike Silver, “one of the most seminal figures in boxing history [who] changed it in several ways fundamentally.”

Mostly renowned by casual fight fans for ending the reign of the legendary John L. Sullivan, another ring icon of Irish descent, Corbett, however, ushered in a new era in prizefighting. With his 21st round knockout of the powerful Sullivan on Sept. 7, 1892, in New Orleans, Corbett [14-4-3 with 4 KOs and 3 no contests] became the first gloved world heavyweight champion.

It was also the first boxing contest under the Marquis of Queensberry Rules, according to Silver, author of “The Arc of Boxing: The Rise and Decline of the Sweet Science,” and a consultant on the Corbett documentary.

“He was the father of modern scientific fighting and used science to defeat brute strength,” added Silver.

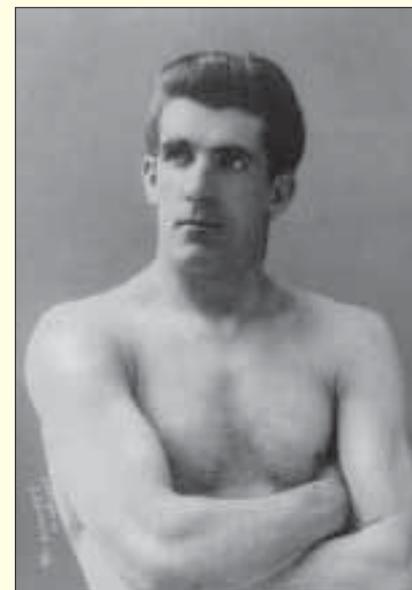
Corbett’s demeanor as a gentleman inspired his famous nickname.

“He was seen as a gentleman because of the way he behaved. He was a bank clerk, well spoken and cultured,” Silver said. “He was so popular that women started attending fights.”

Transcending the ring, Gentleman Jim also gained fame as a movie star who sanitized boxing for a wider audience and became one of the most noted celebrities of his time.

Yet, as others have noted, this star was not without his warts, with allegations of womanizing, bullying and cheating. “Gentleman Prizefighter” attempts to set the story straight.

For more information on the screening, visit go to ticketweb.com and for more information about festival go to www.thecraicfest.com.



A documentary about Gentleman Jim Corbett, the first gloved world heavyweight champion, will be screened Friday night as part of the Craic Fest.

Wild Geese launches new site with party

The re-imagined Irish history and heritage website the Wild Geese goes live Saturday, March 9 at 9 a.m. (Eastern) as www.TheNewWildGeese.com with a seven-hour digital launch party.

All the events of the day and benefits of the site are open to all who sign up, for free, as Wild Geese members.

“As a Wild Geese member, you’ll be able to participate in exclusive forums, video and teleconferences and other dy-

namic learning experiences for free, as well as enjoy concierge services connecting you to heritage products, events and services to best fit your needs,” executive producer Gerry Regan said.

There will be panel discussions during the party, including on the Irish in America’s Civil War, the legacy of Ireland’s Cillini and Magdalene Laundries, and the 1913 Dublin Lockout and Irish activists in the American labor movement.