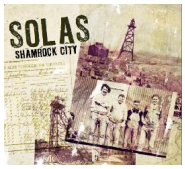
Solas – Shamrock City (2013)



01 – Intro 02 – Far Americay 03 – Tap 'Er Light 04 – Tell God and the Devil 05 – Michael Conway 06 – Girls on the Line 07 – My Fancy 08 – Lay Your Money Down 09 – Columbia Gardens 10 – Arbor Day 11 – Welcome the Unknown 12 – And Now, a Banjo Moment 13 – High, Wide, and Handsome (The Wagoner Twenty-Eighth of January) 14 – Labour Song 15 – Am I Born to Die 16 – No Forgotten Man Musicians: Seamus Egan – flute, tenor banjo, mandolin, tin whistle, low whistle, guitars, bodhran Winifred Horan – violins, vocals Mick McAuley – accordians, contertina, low whistle, vocals Eamon McElholm – guitars, keyboards, vocals Niamh Varian-Barry – vocals

At some time during the year of 1910, a young man named Michael Conway left Co. Mayo, Ireland, for a seemingly more promising life far away in Butte, Montana. Like many his age, he was beckoned by the copper mines and tried his hand once or twice in the boxing rings about town. But, a handful of years after arriving in the States, Conway was killed at the hands of the local cops. (The reason why is still unknown.)

Now, a century later, his great-great nephew Seamus Egan – front man for Philadelphia-based Celtic roots band Solas – decided the time had come to write Conway a musical tribute. After all, Egan no doubt recognized the incredible story in his great-great uncle's migration, as well as the fact that his remarkable story wasn't so different from that of countless others who have made the trek at other points in history. So, he and his band got to work developing a disc which would pay tribute not only to the struggles of their Irish ancestors, but their accomplishments as well.

The result is Shamrock City – the band's tenth studio album since their self-titled 1996 debut. It's a deeply thoughtful, imaginative collection of songs which grapple with the wealth of ideas and emotions inherent in the immigrant journey, as well as the tales which get passed down

through history. Along with the passed-down stories, though, come the passed-down rhythms, melodies, and instruments. Where some more recent Solas recordings have toyed with various other areas of American roots music, Shamrock City seems to be a more solid return to their Celtic music roots.

From “The Richest Hill on Earth” to “No Forgotten Man,” Shamrock City is teeming with stories untold, buried by history only to be resurrected in song. Meanwhile danceable high-octane tunes like “Tell God and the Devil” capture the lively, courageous spirit inherent in moving one’s life far across the ocean.

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