

Irishman in America.

Johnny Logan is about to release a new album which revolves around the Irish-American connection. Logan's three sons also perform on the title song " Irishman in America", written by Johnny Logan himself.

By Rie Nielsen

Johnny Logan is building a lot of bridges on his new album "Irishman in America" which is scheduled to be released on September 19. A bridge between Ireland and America. A bridge between past and present. A bridge between those of us who are still alive and those of our dear ones who have crossed to the land of the dead.

Johnny Logan takes us down many roads and has many ambitions with his new album. It comes as a continuation of the album called "The Irish Connection", released by Logan in Denmark last year in April and a little later in Norway and Sweden, giving him platinum for the number of records sold in Denmark, twice platinum in Norway and gold in Sweden.

Discouraging text message

"The Irish Connection" was made as a consequence of an idea expressed by Johnny Logan's Danish friend and promoter through many years. Logan simply calls him Calle. On "The Irish Connection" Logan sings a number of well-known Irish songs which have been performed in pubs and in other places for as far back as anybody can remember.

Calle believed that this success should be followed up by a new album, on which Logan would be loyal to his Irish background with four Irish traditional songs combined with four American songs plus four brand new Irish songs, written by Logan personally.

"We started the project just before Christmas last year even though I was still busy following up on our success with "The Irish Connection". We were on tour for ten or eleven months. And around Christmas I made a short trip to Australia, where my sister is living. She was getting married, and I was the one to escort her up the aisle. On my way home on the plane I got an SMS telling me that my good friend Calle had died. At the age of fifty-five. It nearly broke my heart", says Johnny Logan.

Logan as a producer

It was a great sorrow for the Irish singer. And unfortunate for the project with the new CD since Calle was supposed to be in charge of the production.

"But I decided to carry on. Also to show Calle my respects. But it meant that I had to do everything myself" explains Johnny Logan with one of his characteristic smiles which indicate that there is no reason why anybody should feel sorry for him for this reason.

On the contrary, it gave Logan an opportunity to test his talent as a producer. "I have personally arranged and produced all of it. And I am very excited to see how it will be received. It is the first time I have tried it. But nothing has been left to chance. I have focused intently on every detail. I would like to make something more adventurous and different this time, but still remain faithful to my audience", explains Johnny Logan.

Around the globe

The recordings practically sent Logan on a journey around the globe. He recorded the rhythmic section - that is drums and bass - in Denmark together with his Danish band. Then he went to Germany to record all the keys, among others keyboard and piano, then he went to Nashville, USA to record the stringed instruments, pedal guitar and steel guitar, dobro, banjo, and the American fiddle – that is the violin.

“There is not a single electric guitar on the album. Everything is made with acoustic guitars”, Johnny Logan explains in a voice reverberating with pride.

From the USA he had to go back to Ireland to record the Irish fiddle and the characteristic Irish tin whistle.

His sons in the chorus

“In two days I did my own recording of the 12 vocals for the songs here in Denmark in the Lundgaard Studios, before I went back to Ireland to record backing-vocals. Also for the song where my sons performed.”

His sons are called Adam, Fionn and Jack. They are 29, 24 and 16 years old. Johnny Logan invited them to sing the chorus on the title song, called “Irish man in America” which he has written himself.

It’s a song about the longing you may experience when you are far from your loved ones. The kind of longing experienced by the Irishmen who sailed all the way across the Atlantic Ocean to try their fortune in the *land of dreams*. They were so far away that they didn’t know whether they would ever return to their green native island and see their dear ones again. In the song this is used as an image of the feelings you may experience when you have lost a dear friend or a close relative. It is the same feeling of privation Johnny Logan has suffered because of the loss of his own father and other dear friends.

“I all of a sudden realised how rapidly things may happen. Calle, who died so suddenly. Another one of my good friends, the singer from The Dubliners, had also died recently. So I really got the idea of including my sons because I wanted them to have this experience to remember when one day I won’t be here any more”, Johnny Logan points out.

Computers and heavy metal

It is, however, not songs and music that occupy most of his sons’ time. Only the youngest, the 16-year-old Jack works seriously with his musical talents by playing the guitar in three different heavy metal bands.

Adam of 29 works as a Senior Project Manager for a computer company and Fionn of 24 is a computer animator. “To me it’s of no importance what they do for a living. That’s entirely up to them. But for their sake I do hope that they will experience more continuous lives than I have experienced. There are many *ups and downs* in the music business”, emphasises Johnny Logan.

But his sons did agree to sing along on the title song. And according to Logan they are actually really good singers. Not only have they inherited their father’s singing voice but also his good sense of humour and his talent for jokes.

“Listen for example to this joke which one of them cracked in the studio: What is it with you, *dad* – are you no longer able to hit the high notes?”, laughs Johnny Logan and continues:

Fathers and sons

“I really don’t believe that they have yet realised what this may mean to them later; that is in a personal way. Now they have something they have produced together with me. My father was a great singer. Patrick O’Hagan was his name. He is long gone, but after his death I have realised that we have actually both won the same song competition when we were quite young. But unfortunately I do not have anything that I have produced together with him. And for that, I am truly sorry. Now they have something together with their dad, and I believe that they will appreciate that one day”, Logan says with a smile.

“But Adam did tell me after the recording of the songs that he is proud of me. And him having said that, means the world to me”, says Johnny Logan and is for a short moment silent and contemplative.

Sexy dad-dance

But even though Johnny Logan has a big heart and is a champion in the art of performing sensuous ballads, he is still not a man who becomes absorbed in sentimentality. So after his story about Adam’s acknowledgement he soon returns to his old humoristic self and tells an anecdote about his second son, Fionn.

The three sons were invited to a Johnny Logan concert in Ireland and at the concert they saw how young girls tossed their bras and their panties on to the stage to their idol whom the sons believed to be somewhat too old for that kind of idolization. So according to Logan, Fionn told him afterwards: “It was a good concert. I’m not so sure about the sexy dad-dance though...”

The Irish-American connection

Beyond “Irishman in America” Logan has also written the songs “Sorry”, “Bridges of my Heart” and “Dancing with my Father”. The latter is also building a bridge to the beloved dear ones who have passed away, as it goes in the first lines of the chorus:

“So I go/ dancing with my father/ through the streets of yesterday....”.

The American link which Logan is making is connected to the history of Ireland, which saw thousands of men and women crossing the Atlantic Ocean to the land on the other side. Along they brought a musical tradition that has influenced the music which arose in the USA.

“Thus bluegrass and the Cajun music have been strongly inspired by Irish music”, says Johnny Logan.

But it is neither bluegrass nor Cajun songs that Logan has chosen for the album from America’s enormous backlog. He has chosen songs that in one way or another have meant something to him. And they are all very different. Right from “This Land is your Land”, which is an old American traditional, to “Piece of my Heart”, which is one of the biggest hits from the folk-rock-queen Janice Joplin.

“It was important for me to find some songs which had a groove which touched me. They are all songs that were popular in the USA in the 70’ies, because I was very attracted to the country in those days and to everything on the music stage then. For example I simply love Janice Joplin, so it was only natural for me to include one of her songs”.

Singer for the President

Yet another bridge between the USA and Ireland - and between the USA and the Logan family - is the bridge that was built when Johnny’s dad, Patrick O’Hagan sang for the three American presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon.

But otherwise it is mainly musically that Johnny Logan wishes to build bridges. He does that by allowing the two musical traditions to blend in untraditional arrangements where for example the Irish and the American fiddle are practically battling in the same tune. But, of course, quite true to Johnny Logan's heart – a mainly friendly battle.

Track list

1. Rocky Road to Dublin.
2. The Night they Drove Old Dixie down
3. Belle of Belfast
4. Dancing with my Father
5. This Land is your Land
6. Piece of my Heart
7. The Alabama Song
8. Bridges of my Heart
9. Sorry
10. Paddy on the Railway
11. Waxies Dargle
12. Irishman in America.

Tour schedule

Johnny Logan visits Denmark with the following concerts for the rest of 2008

October 4:	Skive Theater
November 22:	Tinghallen, Viborg
November 26:	Juvi-klubben, Kalundborg
November 27:	Slagelse Musikhus
November 29:	Munkholm-hallen, Langå
December 1:	Industrien, Aarup
December 4:	Kolding Teater
December 5:	Stubhuset, Støvring
December 6:	Portalen, Greve
December 8:	Nordjyllands MedieCenter, Aabybro
December 9:	Sønderborghus, Sønderborg
December 27:	Lind Hallen, Herning