

## FOCUS on new festival favorites

# Orphans comfortable in trad or pop genre

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Irish Focus

Girl groups have been around, I suppose, just as long as any other singing group. But bringing together a handful of young women to create a unique sound – while also maintaining a distinctly different harmony among the group's members – seems an altogether different sort of challenge.

So one can only imagine the challenges and the rewards when all the members of a girl group happen to be sisters.

Such is the case with a current favorite band at Irish festivals around the country, *The Screaming Orphans*.

Born and raised in a talented musical family in County Donegal, sisters Grainne, Joan, Marie Therese and Angela Diver are not only notable for their ability to blend their voices and personalities while touring across this huge country of ours, but have a musical and cultural “force multiplier” of sorts as they are incredibly comfortable and talented in either a pop or deeply traditional – and Gaelic speaking – music format.

So it is that this group operates on parallel tracks – one as a very popular and entertaining pop music band not unlike the powerful girl bands of the 1980s such as *The Bangles* or *The Go-Gos* and the other as traditional Irish musicians with a flair for slipping into the Irish language or a slip jig set with an enviable ease.

Several years ago, we reported on a pair of albums

released closely together that reflected this duality in Screaming Orphans music with their pop release “East 12th Street” and a companion trad CD “Belle’s Isle.” This year, the Diver girls have done a similar dual release with the trad CD “The Jacket’s Green” and the pop CD



“Lonely Boy.”

Either of these releases more than deserve accolades for the performances delivered in their respective genres. But taken together, they more than provide a little something for everyone.

To start, “Lonely Boy” is comprised of ten tracks, with all but one of the songs credited to “Diver/Diver/Diver/Diver” and are a collection of the usual pop sensibilities but delivered with a pulsating

beat and harmonies you rarely find in otherwise frothy collections like this. The final track – and the only one not written by the talented Diver sisters – is a creative rendition of the familiar “Ghost Riders in the Sky” that shows a playful side of the sisters from Donegal.

On the traditional music CD “The Jacket’s Green” we get to see a much more serious and sedate – though no less entertaining and talented – side of the Diver girls.

Because, according to the liner notes, much of what we hear on this CD comes straight from the family hearth.

**Lonely Boy**  
**The Jacket’s Green**  
The Screaming Orphans  
[www.screamingorphans.com](http://www.screamingorphans.com)  
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“The Gartin Mother’s Lullaby,” they write, “is a Donegal lullaby that our mother sang to use when we were babies.

Our mother also sang ‘Down By the Glenside’ when she sang with her brother’s band, *The Richard Fitzgerald Ceili Band*. ‘I Must Away Now,’ ‘The Lark of the Morning’ and ‘The Jacket’s Green’ were some of our father’s favorite songs.”

The CD is also decorated with painting by the Irish artist Martin Driscoll who the band learned had passed away while they were touring the U.S. during a stop at the Weston Irish Festival near Kansas City, MO. The paintings are a depiction of rural Irish life, not unlike the world that brought us the incredibly entertaining Diver sisters.