

Quartet wears its Irish heart on its sleeve

BY FRANK ROBERTS
CORRESPONDENT

THE SCREAMING Orphans will stop screaming and start singing Friday at the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts and Saturday at the Outer Banks Brewing Station in Kill Devil Hills, N.C.

The group has one of those names that just makes you ask: Why?

Seems the Irish quartet, sisters all, went to school in an old orphanage.

Also, "We lost our mother, who was our lead singer, and our dad, who was our manager and sound man," says to Angela Diver, the bass player. "And screaming is what you usually do when you're stuck with family all the time."

The Screaming Orphans, two blondes and two brunettes, are from County Donegal but now make their home in New York City, which has a large enough Irish population to make them feel at home - even though that's a place they rarely are.

"We spend our life traveling and going places," Grainne Diver said during a recent telephone interview.

"None of us are married. For females it's a little harder to get married. Guys in a band go off, girls stay at home and take care of the family. Our life is on the road, and we have a lot of fun.

"We always argue and, funny thing, with a family you can get away with saying more. In our case we



COURTESY OF THE SCREAMING ORPHANS

The Screaming Orphans are sisters from County Donegal who now make their home in New York City.

"They're unbelievable - down-to-earth. They're personable, and their stage presence is amazing," said Aubrey Davis, owner of the suds establishment. "When they go on, the drinkers stop drinking."

Temporarily.

The Screaming Orphans have traveled the globe - the U.S., Canada, Europe - offering some of the songs they learned at home.

Ask Grainne about her favorite singers, and out comes the Irish Spring soapbox.

"There are so many copycats in music today, and there aren't many strong melodies. A lot of songs, a lot of singers, but no Billy Joel or Bryan Adams. Nowadays, singers remodel themselves, and the people in the music business have been destroying music. I hear bands on the radio, and I don't know the difference, one from the other.

"Wading through all that stuff is like going through a swamp. I love a good, strong tune. I love what you can hum along with. I like the songs of the 1930s. Not enough good songs these days. There's too much quirky stuff. They're not songs. That's not what I'd call them."

There was one more point, and it had to do with some of today's musical groups.

"They never speak. They don't talk to each other. They never smile. We're different. We talk to each other."

IF YOU GO

Who The Screaming Orphans

When 8 p.m. Friday

Where Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts, 101 W. Finney Ave.,

Tickets \$15-\$25, (757) 923-0003

When 8:30 p.m. Saturday

Where Outer Banks Brewing Station, milepost 8½, U.S. 158 Bypass, Kill Devil Hills, N.C.

Tickets \$10; all proceeds go to Outer Banks Hotline. (252) 449-2739.

don't worry about what we say. We don't worry about stepping on toes."

The women, who range in age from 26 to 31, shy away from dancing.

"We never try to dance around. None of us can dance. We never learned," said Grainne, the second-oldest. "We concentrate on the singing. We play some sort of rock, but it's more

pop. We sing and write very melodic songs, and we also do some Irish music.

"In Ireland we tended to steer away from that. We were rebelling. But if you're lonely for your country and your heritage, those songs mean more - compared to when you're living in Ireland. Now, we're much fonder of Irish music. We do some cover songs, things people might know - so it's a mixture of Irish and pop."

As young, young lasses, Grainne, Joan, Angela and Marie-Therese worked with their family band, headed by Kathleen, their American-born mother.

Their first big break came from another Irishman with whom they worked in the late '90s, Sinéad O'Connor. They came to the United States as her backup singers and band. Later, they worked with Peter Gabriel and Joni Mitchell.

They have performed in Kill Devil Hills three times, all at The Outer Banks Brewing Station. Their return engagement is due to their engaging ways as well as their music.

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