



Donnie Munro "**Gaelic Heart**" Hypertension Records

Last century Donnie Munro was lead singer in the Scottish folk-rock band, Runrig. He joined them in 1974 and departed twenty-three years later, ostensibly to stand for a seat in the Scottish Parliament. Munro's attempt to enter Parliament ended in failure.

In early Y2K, January to be precise, Munro launched his solo recording career and "**Gaelic Heart**" is, already, his fourth album for the German Hypertension label. Munro's first recording as a member of Runrig was titled "**Play Gaelic**" and, according to Donnie's liner notes, the making and release of "**Gaelic Heart**" fulfils a lifelong ambition. Donnie was born and raised on the Isle of Syke and while English was the chosen form of communication in school, at home the Munro family always communicated in Gaelic.

Thankfully the four-way fold out liner not only features the lyrics to the eleven songs reproduced in Gaelic, but also in English. A great relief!!!! As for the aforementioned songs, all are credited to Trad. Arr. by Munro/Chris Harley [album producer]/Allan Cuthbertson [album associate producer], yet a composer's name appears alongside eight of the tracks. With regard to the latter, I can only presume that while the songwriter is actually known, the copyrighting of the song has expired. For instance, the opening track "An Eala Bhan" ["The White Swan"] is credited to Domhnall Ruadh Choruna, which when translated into English becomes a North Uist [#] poet, by the name of Donald MacDonald [1887-1967]. In the same vein, a native of Islay [+], Duncan Johnston [1881-1947] is credited as the author of "Sine Bhan" ["Fair Jean"]. Confused? Based on the foregoing, I certainly am!!!

If you were seeking a guide as to the style of music on this album, then I'd say that it possesses a similarly ethereal feel and sound to the recorded works of Clannad and Enya. In fact, apart from Iain McDonald's *less than hi-tech* contributions on flute and whistle and Kate Stewart-Liddon's fiddle, the only other musicians supporting Munro's vocals are Messrs. Cuthbertson and Harley on *programmed* keyboards. Backing vocals and vocal arrangements are also credited to Harley. As for the lyrics, the loss of love and a sense of, sometimes unrequited, wistful longing permeate much of the material featured. In translated form, and from a subjective viewpoint, apart from song titles already mentioned, others include "Calum's Boat," "Young Fair Maid" and "Farewell To The Isle Of Skye." Thank heavens for those translations. As for the musical tradition, Munro honours it with a modern sounding interpretation.

Note.

[#] – An island in the Outer Hebrides group, off the West coast of Scotland.

[+] – An island located of the Argyllshire coast in West Scotland.

Folkwax Rating 7 out of 10

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 02/03