



# The Pure Drop

by Tommy Fegan

A WEEKLY ROUND UP OF TRADITIONAL IRISH MUSIC

## PROFILE: BENNY MCKAY

**Benny, the well known broadcaster, musician, singer and poet comes from a family steeped in the Gaelic tradition. His father, the late Tommy McKay, was closely associated with the Shamrocks GFC and other family members have been involved in various Gaelic games and cultural activities.**

When interment was imposed in 1971, many impromptu fundraising concerts were organised in the Shamrocks Hall in Boat St and Benny enthusiastically threw himself into the effort. One outcome - in addition to the much-needed funds for internees' families - was the emergence of popular 'The Long Kesh Ramblers', eventually morphed into Crubeen. Benny, with his penchant for organising, arranged tours in England, France, Switzerland, USA, Russia and Estonia. Successful LPs were cut and TV appearances were made.

Benny has been central to the promotion of Folk and Traditional music on local radio stations for over 30 years and his intimate knowledge of local events, players and characters is matched by his eclectic range of national and international folk interests.

His passion for music is complemented by his life long commitment to his other indulgences, such as Hurling, the Third Age movement and a host of other charities to which he readily responds with offers of mobilising his legions of contacts in the entertainment world.

He'll not be recognised in the Uilleann Pipers Hall of Fame and there is no truth in the rumor (I think) that when the PLO once famously kidnapped 40 bodhrán players and threatened to release one every hour if their demands were not met, they had Benny as their trump card. His chirpy disposition, love of music, banter and bodhrán make him a favorite at sessions throughout the area, especially at the Railway Bar every Thursday night.

Benny's many friends will gather in the Shamrocks GAA Club this Saturday night to celebrate his birthday. Amongst them all I hope I will dwell.



Benny and Antoinette McKay

## Tí Chulainn Night of Traditional Music, Storytelling and Song

Armagh and Tyrone musicians join forces this Friday at Tí Chulainn, Mullaghbawn to raise funds for local student, Conla O Coim, in aid of the School Aid Romania project. The line up includes local singers Mick Quinn and Len Graham, Mullaghbawn Senior Scór group, All-Ireland Scór Champions in 2006, and the Tyrone based Secret Sessions group comprising Stephen Hayden, fiddle, Charlie Rice, banjo, Clare O'Neill, fiddle, Briega Harper, fiddle, Mark Mohan, banjo and PJ McDonnell on tin whistle and vocals. Great performers and a great cause will ensure this will be a night to remember.

*Q. What's the difference between a bodhrán player and a South American Macaw?  
A. One is loud, obnoxious and noisy, and the other is a bird.*

## PADDY KEENAN

**Friday February 15, Seamus Ennis Centre, The Naul**

This is a rare opportunity to see the great Paddy Keenan in action. Paddy's flowing, open-fingered style of pipe playing, his genius for improvisation and counter-melody combined with the virtuosity and ferocity of his playing makes Paddy one of the most brilliant Irish musicians of his generation, Paddy will be joined by Tommy O'Sullivan on guitar and vocals. Paddy and I define the boundaries of Uilleann Pipe playing...he's at one end, and I'm at the other! Nip down to the Naul to see this legend.

*Q. How do you get five Bodhrán players to play in time?  
A. Only give one of them a Bodhrán!*

Email: [tommyfegan@nsec.info](mailto:tommyfegan@nsec.info) if you would like to contribute in any way to the Pure Drop



Paddy Keenan