THE KILT LIFTERS IN HAWAII

Chris Carr interviewed by Hamish Burgess.

Photo: Colin Edsman

Hamish: Aloha, Chris. I've been playing you on the *Maui Celtic Radio Show* for a few years and saw you at the Hawaiian Scottish Festival in Honolulu.
Tell us a wee bit about yourself. Did you have music in the house growing up?
Chris: There was always something happening musically. My brother plays as well, and back on the mainland we had projects together. I've been playing most of my life, and used to spend my summers seeing Celtic shows and going to Highland Games. You know oddly, it never occurred to me to play Celtic music back then.
When I got here to the Big Island there was nobody really playing the music. I came with the intention of playing guitar in somebody else's band, and when that didn't come through, I asked myself what I really wanted to do, and thought "I really want to play the music that I like the best". So I started a Celtic band, and things have really fallen into place since that time.

Hamish: So, yourself on guitar, flute and vocals, and Mark Caudill on the fiddle?
Chris: Mark was actually the third fiddle player for the band. When we started, we were going through fiddlers like Spinal Tap goes through drummers. Mark just fell into place really quickly. He's a solid professional, fabulous player, and just does everything right.

Hamish: Tell us about the name 'The Kilt Lifters'.
Chris: The Kilt Lifters came to be when my instructor Robbie Calvo, a fantastic player and wonderful mentor, came to the Big Island and was putting on a show. He looked at me and said, "You'd better get your act together because you're on the bill!" So we had to come up with a band real quick, and the name, it just kind of came out of a joke. We were chatting back and forth, and I said, "Ah, just call it The Kilt Lifters". He just laughed and said, "That's the best thing in the world…you've got to do it!"
Hamish: How would you describe your music?
Chris: Celtic folk rock would probably be apropos.

Hamish: Your music in general, where do you draw your repertoire from?
There are two old traditional songs on the latest EP.
Chris: My preference is to take extremely old songs…Celtic tunes and Child Ballads, and kind of modernize them, and bring them into this century. That's the thrust of what the band does. On each album, we like to feature at least one original song, like *Friends Old and New* on this one, and *Jack in the Green* on the 2016 release.

Hamish: And the title track of your latest EP features the local Hawaii scene Celtic characters….
Chris: Well actually that harkens back to the weekend I met you. As a musician throughout all these years, I've never been treated so well as at The Hawaiian Scottish Festival, and that tends to be a theme I've found playing Celtic music…the venues and audience are wonderful. That's where that song came from.

Hamish: There's certainly some characters in the Celtic scene in Hawaii! Scottish and Irish characters…
Chris: Well, you would know…you're one of them!

Hamish: Haha! Closing the new EP is an old classic, *The Parting Glass*, probably made most famous by The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem back in the late 50s and 60s.
Chris: Yeah, I love that song. Interestingly *The Parting Glass* was the most performed song in pubs in Scotland and Ireland, up until Robbie Burns wrote *Auld Lang Syne*…so a lot of history on that one. Honestly, one of the things drawing me to this music is the history behind it. You know all of these songs tell a story, some dating all the way back to the oral tradition, when they didn't have newspapers and internet to spread the news. In the case of *Twa Sisters* and *The Cruel Sister*, they actually stem from the same story, which over 200 songs were written about, in several different countries. That sister murdering the other over a lover…it was like the O.J. Simpson of the day!

Hamish: And your new release coming out soon…a prospective title?
Chris: Probably first quarter of 2019, it's going to be *Pour Another Round*… another song about our experiences.

Hamish: That's great, Chris. Thanks very much for talking to Irish Music Magazine.
Chris: Absolutely. Thank you for having me, and aloha!

Hamish: Aloha!
www.thekiltlifters.com
www.mauiceltic.com/radio.htm

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