



## CELTIC CHAOS

BY DAVID MORRISON

I'm aware that you've not started reading this article to learn about the woes of its author, but please indulge me for just one moment. It's important in the context of what follows that you know I've twice beaten cancer, and that the disease decimated my family. As a natural consequence, my cognizance of fundraising activities in the name of research is quite acute.

To this end, what a joy it is as a west coast newbie to encounter Celtic Chaos, a Qualicum Beach band whose efforts in this direction are truly impressive. Their debut CD, *Chaos in the Kitchen*, alone raised over ten thousand dollars for the BC Cancer Foundation and they've piled on a further five thousand-odd since. And they do this through euphoric interpretations of traditional, mainly instrumental "social" music from far beyond these shores. Scottish, Irish, Swedish and Appalachian traditional canons, plus French-Canadian dance music and songs of Cape Breton all figure in the extensive Celtic Chaos repertoire.

Founded in 2003 by fiddler Joyce Beaton and her cellist daughter Emma, the band grew out of home sessions, where musicians

gathered to rollick in the unadulterated joy of playing traditional Celtic music with each other. It is, after all, a form full of fiery spirit, soul and mysticism, so I'd imagine as a non-musician that it's an absolute blast to play. It's also thankfully, of course, a portable concept, in this instance arriving with Joyce when her family moved to Vancouver Island from her native Scotland twenty years ago. "We often had ceilidhs (sessions) at our house," she told me. "Folks would sing, play tunes, tell stories, poems and more. We continued this tradition in our home when we moved to Canada."

Joyce's father passed away from a brain tumour in 2001. The following year, the family hosted a fundraising event that effectively kick-started Celtic Chaos as recording artists.

"We started to think about fundraising for the BC Cancer Foundation, and thought that a 'Robert Burns Supper & Ceilidh Dance' would be a great way to combine the family talents for Celtic music and poetry with something my dad always enjoyed," Joyce began in explanation. "(The supper) was such a success that we've done it annually ever since. We were asked if we had a CD after the first

Burns supper. This planted the idea that people who had heard us play wanted a recording of the music! We realized we could have fun playing music together, and raise some money at the same time!"

Joined by a cast of talented friends including accordionist Dave Barta, percussionist Jane Good, guitarist Jayne Lapper and Gordon Lafleur on penny whistle and wooden flute, Joyce and Emma now take their "mobile ceilidh" all over the Island and further afield. They're as happy to play a festival in front of hundreds as they are a private celebration, but it's the smaller shows that Joyce particularly appreciates. "Many people enjoy the smaller venues and house concerts that tend to attract folk musicians, and there is the opportunity to interact and experience the music at a more intimate level," she says, "rather than sitting way back at a large concert setting where there are many distractions and the acoustic experience is far removed!"

Joyce and Emma's second release, *Off the Beaton Track* (2005), also a BCCF fundraiser, was not a Celtic Chaos project per se but, like their brand new release, *Pretty Fair Maid*, credited to mother and daughter. Celtic Chaos members are involved on the new offering, but it's seventeen year-old Emma who takes centre stage on this one, even overshadowing mum. Aside from the distinctive cello playing that will soon see her depart the Island to study at Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA., Emma takes lead vocal and contributes sprightly banjo. Before she goes, however, Joyce, Emma and friends will be locally launching *Pretty Fair Maid* with a typical ceilidh at the Village Theatre in Qualicum Beach on Friday June 27th. Celtic Chaos will continue in Emma's absence with an adjustment to their sound, gigs are booked through to March 2009.

Throughout history, humankind has deemed many things impossible: flying, electricity, landing on the moon...a cure for cancer. The answer will come. The inspirational selflessness of such as Celtic Chaos can only help speed up its arrival. In the meantime, I see no reason as an interested party why we shouldn't dance and make merry while we wait, and neither does Joyce Beaton. ~

*More information including Celtic Chaos' concert schedule can be found at [www.celticchaos.ca](http://www.celticchaos.ca)*