Young Dubliners to rock Big Sky

September 10th benefit concert

By Laura Bell

With a blend of Celtic and rock-n-roll The Young Dubliners have entertained fans throughout the country. And now Big Sky residents can see the four-man band and help benefit the new park.

The 2nd annual Big Sky Park fundraiser concert is taking place Wednesday, September 10, 2008 at the Big Sky Park Pavilion. The evening will open with the Canadian folk/rock music of the Clumsy Lovers, followed by the hard-rocking Irish band, Young Dubliners.

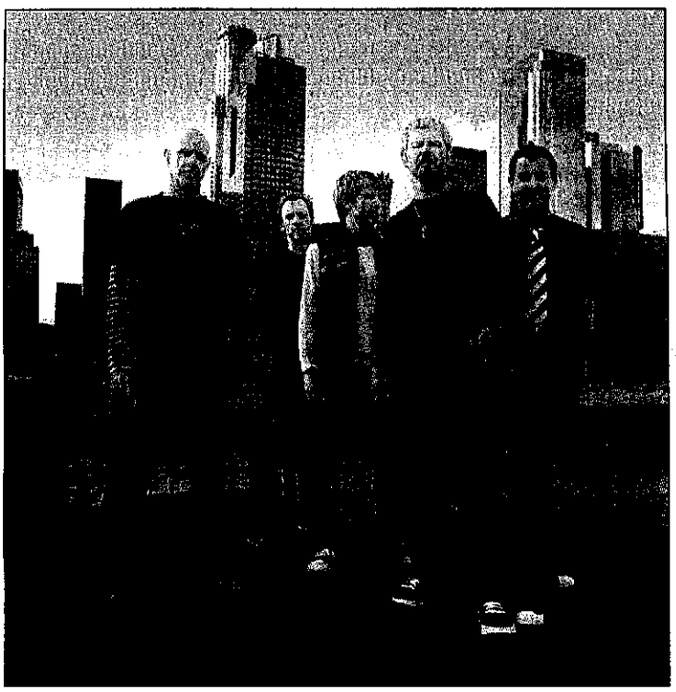
One hundred percent of ticket proceeds benefit the Big Sky Community Corporation in their effort to build a new park, which includes plans for a new concert amphitheatre.

The hard-rocking Irish band, the Young Dubliners owe everything to their fans. "They keep us honest, expecting good music both on the road and on the albums," mentions frontman Keith Roberts.

"We are all aware of how lucky we are to be making a living by doing what we love. Without being on the road and playing to our fans, that just wouldn't be possible," Roberts explains. Building a fervent fan base comparable to that of jam band rockers like Phish and Dave Matthews Band, The Young Dubliners have become notorious for the whirling "jig pits" that erupt at their live shows.

In fact, the group's origins can be traced back to Los Angeles' vibrant pub scene in which Dublin natives Keith Roberts (vocals, guitar) and Paul O'Toole first met. Roberts was composing some Irish ballads at the time and thought a band might be in the offing. Assembling a rag-tag team of Irish transplants and like-minded American rockers, The Young Dubliners grew into a pugnacious music machine resulting in their debut, the Rocky Road EP (1994). It exhibited a hefty rock sound that made them a club favorite. Breathe followed a year later with the addition of Chas Waltz (violin, keys, harmonica, etc).

By 2000, the band had morphed into a septet without O'Toole and released the critically acclaimed Red. The presence of the band sky-rocketed: Gabriel Byrne requested the band to write the theme song for his television show Madigan Men and they spent much of 2001 touring Europe with Jethro Tull, and the US as headliners and as openers for acts such as John Hiatt and Robert Cray. The Young Dubliners also revved up the crowd at the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City. That same year, the band scaled back down to a five-piece - Roberts, Brendan Holmes (Bass), the returning Waltz (who had left the band in 1995), Bob Boulding (guitar) and David Ingraham (drums) - and released Absolutely. "It really was a reflection of the band," says Roberts. "It's got the sense of humor of the band, along with the balls-y lyrics that maybe in the past I couldn't bring myself to write. You put it all together and you get this good-feeling, upbeat album. That record captures us at the time, Absolutely. The return of Chas Waltz, multi-tasking on fiddle, keyboards, harmonica, mandolin, and backing vocals, heralded a renewed creative vigor. "My leaving had more to do with previous obligations than with creative differences," he explains. "When Keith asked if I was interested in coming



back, I was ready to get back to being part of a band and touring again."

After going on a number of headlining and co-headlining US tours (Johnny Lang, Collective Soul, Great Big Sea and others), the quintet settled down to record Real World - an album influenced by their predecessors (Waterboys/Pogues/

U2/Big Country) and most importantly, life on the road. From Irish-flavored anthemic rock to rowdy pub tunes, lead singer Keith Roberts voice is stronger than ever and the songwriting, performance, and production show a new maturity and artistic ambition.

Roberts notes, "Since Absolutely, we've become a much tighter band. It's the first time we've had the same members for two albums in a row, plus we've had the benefit of relentless touring. I think those two factors have really come together to make us sound and write better." During the interlude between Absolutely and Real World came another event which drew the band in. Roberts underwent a throat surgery which required months of vocal cord rehabilitation. "My surgery made us all aware of how close we came to losing it all. Our determination to succeed is even stronger than before," he reflects.

In 2006, Keith Roberts and his raucous band of Irish locked themselves away in the studio for seventeen days to focus on creating a definitive shout out to the masters of Irish song past and present titled With All Due Respect: The Irish Sessions (out on 429 Records). Roberts refers to the song selection as "the best of the best" representing "poets, playwrights and vagabonds." Indeed, centuries old traditional melodies shimmer bookended by distinctive romps through the songcraft of Shane McGowan which brush up against the wistfully sad lyrics of Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh.

"...The Irish Sessions" is nothing if not a labor of love for the Young Dubliners. What was once a project that seemed to take forever to come to fruition ironically came together in a rapid-fire recording session. Great thing, too as the album retains a remarkably raw "live" feel. Although better known for their brand of hard-hitting original Celtic rock music, reinterpreting the work of other Irish songwriters takes the band to passionate new heights. The songs evoke deep emotions that burst through the organic production. Produced by Tim Boland and mixed by Ken Sluiter, "Sessions" remains poignant while unearthing the rocking soul found in the traditional and the modern.

Says Dubliners irrepressible lead singer/founder Keith Roberts of the overwhelming demand for an album of Irish covers: "They asked for it, so we gave it to them. And had a lot of fun along the way."

Hear what the critics have to say:

"...the Young Dubliners stole the show... immensely likable from the outset, displaying their varied skills in everything from a rock-drenched Irish reel to the emotive, Tear for Fears-like ballad "Scream"... then a Pogues-like punk-folk tune that had the audience in ecstasy." – ***Boston Globe***

"The Young Dubliners... set the cheering and chanting crowd in motion...the band delivered a colorful collection of tunes with boisterous charm and considerable musicianship." – ***Washington Post***

"...the Young Dubliners performed a rollicking 45-minute set that had the crowd pumped up from the get-go. Their blend of rock and pop as filtered through their Celtic vision rocked the house." – ***The Hollywood Reporter***

For their latest release, Keith Roberts and his raucous band of Irish transplants and local Los Angeles musicians brought some of the Emerald Isle back to the states.

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"On their sixth album, the Young Dubliners come off like a West Coast version of Boston's beloved Dropkick Murphys, rocking, reeling and pummeling their way through a perfect Paddy's Day program of Irish favorites made famous by everyone from Planxty to the Pogues." - Boston Herald

A great band, playing for a great cause. Hope to see you there.