

Shilelagh Law

Band Biography

Shilelagh Law was born out of the close-knit Irish American neighborhoods of Yonkers and The Bronx. After a few years of wandering around after graduating college, Terence Brennan, Richard Popovic and Stephen Gardner re-connected over their mutual love of old Irish songs. They had known each other since elementary school, although their musical tastes growing up were more geared towards heavy metal, hardcore/punk and grunge. Indeed the three of them played in a band together for a few summers which was a weird mix of those three genres. But even then, back in 1993-94, a heavily distorted version of Wild Rover found its way onto their set list, which left a few people scratching their heads but many more singing and slamming along. By the time they sat back down together in 1998, Terence was playing the bodhran, a skill he learned during his year abroad at University of Dublin. Steve had swapped his guitar for a bass and Rich had traded in his electric guitar for his beloved Martin acoustic. But although the instruments had gotten more traditional, the fast and rowdy liberties they took with old Irish standards gave the songs new life and dragged them kicking and screaming into the light of a new day.

After cutting their teeth for a few years with their first fiddler Mary T., Denis McCarthy joined Shilelagh Law after hearing about them from his brother Kevin. Denny had been a powerhouse on the traditional music scene in his youth, winning multiple all-Ireland championships in a number of categories. But after walking away from music for a while, he decided to dip his toe back in the water just as SL was looking for a new fiddler. Serendipity. The music instantly gelled and the live shows took on a new energy and intensity that still has people talking about them in hushed and awed tones fifteen years later. And after occasionally sitting in over the years and contributing his masterful piano accordion skills to a few albums, Kevin McCarthy officially joined the band. The sound was complete, and the New York Irish music scene has never been the same.

Shilelagh Law quickly progressed from small pubs and bars in the Bronx and Yonkers to anchoring festivals from Brooklyn to Saratoga. Along the way highlights have been playing for the Notre Dame Booster club at Giants Stadium and Fed Ex Field, selling out three sections of seats (around 900 tickets) at Citi Field for the New York Mets Irish Heritage night, and sharing the bill with none other than Jerry Lee Lewis at the Yonkers Riverfest, which immediately put them one degree of separation from Elvis and Johnny Cash. Their songs have been featured in movies, a Honda web commercial and, most recently, the CBS cop drama 'Blue Bloods'. And while the venues and ticket sales have grown exponentially, they have never forgotten their roots and still love to play packed bars and pubs in Yonkers and the Bronx, maintaining the vital link to the culture and geography that helped to shape their distinctive sound.

When asked why they never toured nationally to build on their regional success, the lads merely shrug and say 'We got jobs and families'. Featuring two members of the FDNY, one recently retired member of the NYPD, a high-school teacher and a carpenter/stay-at-home dad, their blue-collar work ethic is no act—they live it. And therein lies a part of their appeal and a secret to their successful eighteen-year run as one of the top-drawing Irish acts in the Northeast. They are five regular guys who work hard in their daily life who happen to be great musicians and who pride themselves on putting on a great show, every time. People recognize and value their authenticity and commitment to the music and culture. Shilelagh Law sees their role as the little neighborhood band that makes big waves, wherever it goes.