

## Q&A

# Flogging Molly's Matthew Hensley Talks Celtic Tunes, Punk, Politics, and Skateboarding



By Lee Zimmerman, Tue., Feb. 1 2011 @ 2:00PM

Best known for blending an upstart attitude with Celtic tradition, **Flogging Molly** can not only claim a sonic but also a geographical bond with the old country.

The band's founder and frontman Dave King is a Dublin native whose familiarity with Irish insurgency is underscored by the fact he's able to draw on his own roots and reflections to shape the songs' themes, from childhood memories of religious and political strife to his forced relocation to the United States.

Last week, Crossfade spoke with another Flogging Molly member, the

band's piano, concertina, and accordion player Matthew Hensley, about Celtic tunes, St. Paddy's Day, punk, politics, and skateboarding.

*Crossfade: Is there a special affinity and kinship with bands like the Dropkick Murphys, Black 47, and the Pogues?*

*Matthew Hensley:* For the most part, yeah. I loved the Pogues growing up. Anytime they're around and I'm not touring, I go to see them play. I actually got to meet a few guys from the band and occasionally I email them and say hello. It's a big honor for me to even be in that game. We're friends with Black 47 and I've sat in with Dropkick Murphy a couple of times so I try to keep up with as much as possible.

*Your bookings for St. Patrick's Day must extend well into the next decade.*

We usually only book ourselves a year in advance. I'm just happy we have a holiday we can count on.

*Obviously, Flogging Molly is also well known for the energy you put out on stage. Plus, the band plays like 300 gigs a year. Given that combination, how do you maintain your stamina?*

When we're together, that energy just comes naturally. Even when I'm sick or exhausted, by the time I get back onstage and the crowd starts reacting, all the energy comes back. I just feel like I'm going to make it work for the people who have paid their money to see us. They anticipate all this energy and I just can't let those people down.

*You guys also have a unique musical mix of the traditional music of Ireland and this rowdy punk-like attitude. How do you go about achieving that blend?*

Dave was born in Ireland and he writes almost all the songs, and a lot of the lyrics are about how Dave sees his world, growing up in Ireland, coming to America, and all the different facets of those situations. I play accordion. But before I joined Flogging Molly, I would do a lot of Irish sessions. That helped me learn traditional Irish music. When I'm not touring, I'll go and do an Irish session here in San Diego. So that helps me keep my chops up with that kind of music. I do love traditional Irish music on its own -- I play it, I listen to it. But Floating Molly takes it to another level. Obviously it's more punk- and rock 'n' roll- influenced. We give it everything we can.

*There's also a political element that enters into it too, no?*

Oh yeah, absolutely. We don't try to be a political band, but the world just keeps on forcing the issue. I won't ignore anything either. When certain things happen in this world, we'll take notice and we'll pick a side. And whatever little influence we have, we'll use it for the betterment of this world.

*What kind of issue would you guys feel like you have to get behind?*

A lot of our new record -- especially a lot of the lyrics -- has to do with the fact that the world's kind of gone to shit. You have people that are oppressed and there are a lot of things about our country that are just coming apart. This album has a lot to do with that, because we're looking around at our surroundings and that has a lot to do with how we feel as a band. When Bush ran for his second term, we were pretty public in our opposition. We didn't back him, we didn't believe in him, so we were rallying against him. And we regularly auction off old instruments to raise money for homeless people. None of us are millionaires but we try to do what we can. So we work with different organizations and raise money around the world.