

jigs & reels

Make and break harbour

It's not just the name of a song on Shanneyganock's new album; the band is trying to crack the national music scene

BY STEVE BARTLETT

The Express

Shanneyganock's audience could not have gotten any smaller. It was on a March 18, the day after St. Paddy's party.

The popular Newfoundland band was hired to play for one person.

Yes, one person.

"Which can be a little bit intimidating," admits Chris Andrews, the big, bushy bearded, blonde-haired singer/guitarist.

"I'd rather play for 5,000 than the one."

In the coming weeks, months and years, the boys in the band hope to hit the stage for crowds of 5,000 or more on a regular basis.

No doubt they'll still play for one, if the price is right, but the guys in Shanneyganock want to crack the national music scene and become a successful Canadian touring band.

They hope their new CD, *Set You Free*, is the vehicle to take them there.

"This (album) represents a new clean slate," Andrews says. "Shanneyganock is not just a pub band. You don't need to get loaded and go see Shanneyganock in a small atmosphere to have a good time. We've proved that over and over again. This is our time that we're going to open it up."

'WELL-PLANNED'

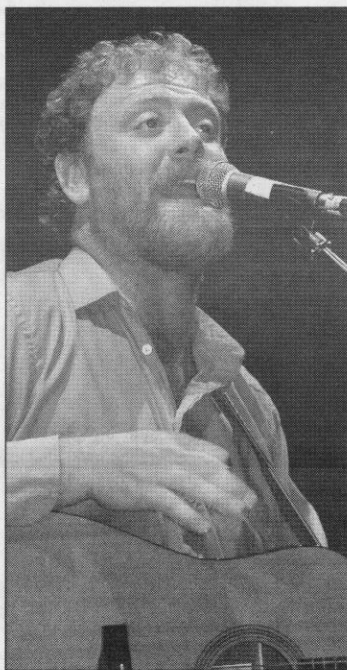
To "open it up," the band recently played its last scheduled St. John's bar date for 2004 and is currently preparing to play summer festivals across Newfoundland and Labrador.

Shanneyganock then starts a Canadian tour, beginning in the Atlantic region Aug. 10, before moving onto Ontario in October and western Canada in November.

"We've talked about this," Andrews says with confidence. "It's well-planned. We've had this record in the box for months, sitting in the office."

"When I say change, it's not going to change the good time you're going to have. The music is not going to change. It's just that we've decided that this band is good enough to do whatever it wants to do and now is the time to do it."

The intent to jump onto bigger stages doesn't mean Shanneyganock is forgetting its roots and people will never again get see the band perform in a pub. They just won't see it any time soon.



Steve Bartlett/The Express

Chris Andrews: "We've decided that this band is good enough to do whatever it wants to do and now is the time to do it."

"We're not that silly to say we're never going to play a bar again," Andrews says. "That was our bread and butter for years. If it weren't for places like Erin's Pub and O'Reilly's, we'd never be where we are now. Never."

'LIVE LIKE A ROCK STAR'

Shanneyganock is comprised of the deep-voiced Andrews, singer/multi-instrumentalist Mark Hiscock, bassist Bob Pike, drummer Dan Smith and either Colin Carrigan or Patrick Moran. The latter two share fiddling duties, depending on their schedules.

Andrews says his first nine years fronting Shanneyganock — which has seen a number of line-up changes in that time — have been "amazing."

"It's never been an easy road, I'll tell you that right now."

"You almost live like a rock star, but you don't get paid like one."

But they do get paid. Asked if the band

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— Chris Andrews

members are making a living, Andrews quickly replies, "Just barely."

"After all these years of doing it, we've still been able to stay together. We haven't had to get day jobs. We're the last real deal. I don't know if there's another band in Newfoundland, a traditional band, that doesn't have a day job."

Except for Great Big Sea, he allows.

But surviving in 'the business' has meant lots of hard work, Andrews says.

"We stick to the fact that slow and steady wins the race. Work, work, work, tour, tour, tour, in front of more people, and it has been a success for us, even though we got pigeon-holed a little bit as being a 'bar band' that you had to be plowed to go see. Which we're breaking strongly every day... Now we're one of the premier bands in Newfoundland and we're not afraid to say it."

To reach this point, Shanneyganock has also been through many ups and downs. There have been some really good experiences and some really bad ones.

"I remember one time," Andrews says, "we got stuck in the ice storm and we were supposed to play concert in... Atlantic Canada we'll say. By the time we got there, we were 27 hours travelling. We got there and they had sent a police car to come get us at the airport."

"It had been a sold out show. Now 27 hours since we hopped out of the bed, we walked right into the venue and played and, when we finished, the lady came up and said, "I'm going to dock your pay. I didn't think you gave your full performance."

Suffice to say, Shanneyganock hasn't played the venue since. The band did get its money, though.

"A lot of bar owners, musicians are very

low on their totem pole," Andrews interjects. "We've heard stories, 'Get up with your ugly stick and do your job.' Some people treat you with the utmost respect and some people treat you like dirt. It's like anything."

'NOT FAKE'

Because earning a living as a musician in Newfoundland and Labrador is such a tough slug, Andrews realizes he and his mates are fortunate Shanneyganock is still around.

He thinks the group has lasted because people took to the fact it is a "real Newfoundland band" that keeps things simple.

"We're not fake. We're who we are and, when you come to see our show, you're going to see the same thing — a bunch of burly fellas up ranting and roaring — and you're going to have a good time."

Andrews and his mates took the same 'keep it simple' approach to recording *Set You Free*, Shanneyganock's fourth album.

He says the 13-song compilation came together after they went through "about 100 songs" and picked the ones they liked.

The attitude in selecting the songs and making the music, Andrews explains, was not to produce something so complex people wouldn't enjoy it.

"It's no good to you if you can't sing it Saturday night at a kitchen party at your uncle's. If there's 19,000 chords, everyone is going to say, 'Yeah, that's great.' But if something is so complicated you can't dance to it... We always try to keep our music very good and strong, but simple enough that everyone can enjoy it. And I think that'll be the continuing success of Shanneyganock."

Andrews says the band also took the philosophy that "you're only as good as your last record" into the studio.

"So the ball was really in our corner. We had to step it up again. It's counter-productive to go down in records. We've seen bands do it, come out hot, hot, hot and then it's down, down, down."

"It defeats the purpose. You have to go up. We put ourselves under a fair bit of pressure to make sure it could be the record *Scallywags* was and more. And we think we've done it. We're very proud of it, very proud of it."