

Altan

The Gap Of Dreams

Street Date: March 2, 2018



After thirty years of playing on stages all over the world from Dublin to New York, Tokyo to Sydney, the premier traditional Irish band, **Altan** came back to the hills of Donegal to record their new album, **THE GAP OF DREAMS**. The 13 tracks transport the listener to the lifestyle of rural Donegal, to a time before electricity when folks would gather together in the mists of winter to tell stories, sing songs and dance into the wee hours of the night. The music lifted the locals' spirits and helped elevate them beyond the hardships of the day like famine, conflict, and emigration. It is this spirit that informed the development of the band through their many phases of growth from a duo performing in pubs to international touring and recording artists.

The album title, *THE GAP OF DREAMS*, is borrowed from a poem by **Francis Carlin**, The Ballad of Douglas Bridge, in which he writes: "The Gap of Dreams is never shut," referring to the gap between this world and the Otherworld. The Otherworld has always exerted a large influence on the fiddling tradition of County Donegal and has served as inspiration for song, music, and folklore.

The album features many sets of traditional Donegal reels, such as **Néilidh Boyle's** provocative composition, "Seán sa Cheo" (John in the Mist), as well as original compositions. **Martin Tourish** wrote two lively reels in the Donegal style: "Tuar," which translates to "omen or sign," and "Oíche Fheidhmuíil," meaning "a spirited night."

Singer and founding member **Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh** became the 2017 recipient of the TG4 Gradam Ceoil/Traditional Musician of the Year, one of Ireland's highest musical honors, recognizing her prominent role in supporting, nurturing and strengthening Irish traditional music. One of Mairéad's compositions for this album is a slip jig, which features the title track, "The Gap of Dreams," and is followed by two more. Mairéad's daughter Nia Byrne wrote the first titled "Nia's Jig," and plays fiddle on the track. **Mark Kelly's** son Sam penned the second, "The Beekeeper," (logically named because it's in the key of B!), and plays concertina on the track. Four of the songs are in Irish (Gaelic), which is Mairéad's first language, and the language of the northwest of Donegal.

Back in Donegal, at Attica Studios in the townland of Termon, it seemed as if the inspiration of the beloved landscape spilled into the studio. With producers **Michael Kenney** and **Tommy McLaughlin**, the new album captures the essence that has continued to represent the hallmark of Altan's music.

THE GAP OF DREAMS will be released on March 2nd, 2018 on Compass Records.

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