

Mahones in concert with new recording

BY LYNN SAXBERG

Finny McConnell has good news. His band, the Mahones, finished recording their new disc yesterday. *Take No Prisoners* will be the first album of new material from Ontario's beloved Celtic party band in nearly five years.

It won't be available until March 14, but frontman McConnell describes it as a "pretty heavy" helping of Irish punk. For the first time in the band's long history, he had a hand in producing it, and rounded up a colourful cast of special guests, including Dropkick Murphys' piper Scruffy Wallace and Billy Talent guitarist Ian D'Sa.

Now McConnell and his bandmates are "keen to get back in front of Canadian audiences. The fun starts tonight with a fundraiser for the Irish Society of the National Capital Region at the Capital Music Hall, the band's first Ottawa appearance in more than a year.

The past 12 months have been divided between the studio and jaunts to various European countries, where the Mahones are finding a renewed interest in Celtic punk. To launch the new disc, tours of the U.S., Canada and Europe are planned for 2006.

"There's a whole new underground scene around bands like Dropkick Murphys, and it's just huge," says McConnell. "We've been around through the '90s and we're getting a lot of kickback respect in that scene. Everybody's rediscovering us and we're getting a whole new crowd of fans now."

The band formed more than a decade ago after a particularly sloppy St. Paddy's Day, and became one of Canada's top club acts.

Instead of resorting to watered-down fiddle tunes, the Mahones have always been able to find the punk streak in Celtic music and crank it up, much like the Pogues in their heyday.

For Ottawa's Irish society, a non-profit organization that raises money for St. Patrick's Home and other worthy community causes, tonight's concert is aimed at making young people aware of the society and its activities.

The Mahones play at the Capital Music Hall tonight
Tickets & times, 789-9922.