

**North Sea Gas**

**Memorial Hall Library**

**Andover, Massachusetts**

**October 15, 2014**

North Sea Gas performed to an enthusiastic audience at the Memorial Hall Library in Andover, Massachusetts in a room covered with the historic relics of Andover's proud past of radical abolitionism. It was an appropriate setting for a band who brought their own Scottish roots and branches that evening. We had not caught up with North Sea Gas in a while. Expression with balance, of both history and art, is basic to North Sea Gas and because of that they are the great communicators of the tradition, often like "it happened yesterday." With songs from "Twa Recruiting Sergeants," which harks back to another time, and then again on a different plane could have been today, to the first person, "A Little Bit More," and from the ghosts of the past to the day-to-day of the present, North Sea Gas weaves a consistent thread. As with the songs, the room was a perfect setting for the instrumentals as demonstrated by the strength of Grant Simpson's fiddling and his integration of instrumentals from other tunes into the songs. Because North Sea Gas is the opposite of much of which passes in Celtic music as "innovative," Dave Gilfillan, Ronnie MacDonald, and Grant Simpson are all the more expressive and communicative in what they do and, certainly at the end of it all, that was underscored. After a strong passionate "Say Will We Yet," North Sea Gas went to a powerfully sad "Loch Lomond." One of the best!

North Sea Gas sets the standard for Scottish music.

**AK – Celtic Beat Magazine**

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**NORTH SEA GAS**

**Fire in the Glen**

**Scotdisc Records CDITV 849 16Tracks**

Edinburgh based trio North Sea Gas has been active on the folk scene since the early 80s. They have released in excess of 15 albums to date and have toured throughout Europe and the USA. Playing predominantly Scottish folk music and songs with some Irish and American material they inherit the mantle vacated by The Corries and The McCalmans with tight vocal harmonies and well-chosen material. Their latest album *Fire in the Glen* continues the trend of mixing popular Scottish ballads with some instrumental pieces and original songs. The trio lead by vocalist Dave Gilfillan with Ronnie MacDonald and Grant Simpson provide a solid well-honed sound vocally strong and musically complimentary while utilising mostly fiddle, bouzouki, G-Banjo and guitar to accompany their upfront vocals. This time round they cover songs by Andy M. Stewart in the haunting title track *Fire in the Glen*, Davy Steele's *Heave yah o* and Matt McGinn's poignant lullaby *Coorie Doon* to close all showing considerable poise, light and shade. There are more boisterous moments like the opening *Awa Whigs Awa*, Johnny Cope and *Tae the Weavers Gin ye Go* and Grant Simpson's fiddle work recalls that of Aly Bain somewhat showing commendable technique. One thing that is most commendable about North Sea Gas is their ability to balance up tempo material with quieter more thoughtful moments and treat each with commitment and professionalism. *Fire in the Glen* is an excellent showcase for their talents and shows them taking the Scottish ballad group mantle with fire and grace.

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