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Thundering voices: Celtic Thunder show at Embassy Theatre brings mix of popular songs and Christmas music

By James Grant of The News-Sentinel
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With the holiday season upon us, why not add a wee bit of Celtic fun to your Christmas list?

On Wednesday, the Celtic Thunder show rolls into the Embassy Theatre at 7:30 p.m. It guarantees not only great songs from the past 30 years performed with a Celtic twist, but a lot of Christmas music as well.

Celtic Thunder is a male version of the very successful Celtic Woman show and features Celtic and modern music performed by six men who sing solo and in an ensemble. They are backed by a talented group including nine musicians and one dancer.

This new production, titled "It's Entertainment & Christmas!," consists of two segments. The first half, "It's Entertainment," focuses on songs from the past 30 years, while the second half of the show is Christmas music.

Keith Harkin, one of the six male performers, spoke with us about the show and promises that people of all ages should find something to enjoy.

"Really what you get when you go to our show, it's something for everyone," Harkin said. "The Christmas show, there's loads of songs ... there's a song by Mariah Carey, of all people, believe it or not.

"We come together, have a lot of fun on stage," he said. "I'm actually really looking forward to doing the Christmas show. It'll get every one in the spirit. For me, because I've been on the road now since August, I'm really looking forward to getting home. It's going to get me in the mood to go home, too."

Not only is Harkin an accomplished singer, he also writes music and plays guitar. During the Celtic Thunder show, he gets to show off some of his guitar prowess along with performing a surfer medley that is near and dear to his heart, as he's a fan of surfing.

"I do a song called 'Whiskey in the Jar.' Neil (Byrne) and I do a duo on guitar on that. We do a song called 'The Dutchman' — it's a really nice song. More of the Steve Goodman's version than Makem and Clancy version."

Harkin's surfer medley is "like three of the Beach Boys' songs."

With the success of Celtic Thunder, including five hit CDs, three live DVDs and tours around the world, you would think Harkin tried desperately to find a spot in the show, but that's not quite the way things transpired.

"I was actually recording ... back in 2007," Harkin said. "I just finished recording that day, and I was home having a beer with my dad at the local bar, and my dad talked me into going to the audition for Celtic Thunder.

"I had no idea what it was or how it happened or who was running it ... My dad sent me in a taxi to the audition and, lo and behold, I'm sitting here today in L.A. (where he was during this phone conversation)."

With a solo album expected to be released next year, Harkin said he enjoys the opportunity to be able to perform — whether it's in Celtic Thunder or solo.

"My favorite part is just really getting to do what I do on stage," Harkin said. "I love playing. The very first show, I got to write a song for it called 'Lauren and I.' For every musician, to walk on the stage with a 16-piece orchestra and do one of your own songs — really, it doesn't get much better than that."



More Information

Concert

What: The Irish group Celtic Thunder performs "It's Entertainment & Christmas!"

When: 7:30 p.m. Wednesday

Where: Embassy Theatre, 121 W. Jefferson Blvd.

Cost: \$34.50, \$44.50, \$49.50 and \$65. Tickets available at the Embassy box office, Ticketmaster outlets, www.ticketmaster.com and 1-800-745-3000.