

# BAND SPOTLIGHT

# BURNING BRIDGET CLEARY



by BRYAN CULVER  
photo by BRIAN BUCHANAN



While traditional Celtic music—lovingly referred to as *Trad*—isn't typically a genre you just randomly stumble upon, it certainly begs the question: why not? There are few genres of music that boast such an abundantly rich history, that are so rugged and full of energy and evoke such a wide range of emotions. You can see how a young violinist might become completely enthralled with the utter madness of the fiddle, and set her mind then and there, to practice relentlessly until she's made her mark on the Trad circuit.

Such is the story of Rose Baldino, fiddler-extraordinaire, singer, songwriter and leader of Irish Folk Quartet *Burning Bridget Cleary*. Rose began her musical journey at the age of eight in Montgomery County, where she first began classical training on violin. But by the time she reached middle school, she was begging to take up fiddle lessons. Rose wasn't even finished high school when she formed the band that would take her to unimaginable heights.

*Burning Bridget Cleary* has been captivating audiences with breathtaking live performances for more than a decade. The current lineup includes Rose's father, *Lou Baldino*, handling rhythm and bass on guitar, percussionist *Peter Trezzi*, and current featured fiddler *Amy Besbara*. Over the years, they've garnered numerous well-earned accolades within the Trad community including being nominated for "Top Traditional Group in a Pub, Festival, or Concert" by the Irish Music Association. They are regularly played on syndicated radio programs, are a fixture at major folk festivals, did a tour of Ireland in 2013, and perhaps most impressive of all, have put out five full-length albums since their inception. Most contemporary artists can't even come close to that level of prolificacy. Furthermore, *CelticRadio.net* named their 2<sup>nd</sup> album, *Everything Is Alright*, their 2009 Album of the Year, and their third album, *Totes for Goats*, was formally entered into the traditional music archives in Dublin, Ireland. Not too shabby to say the least.

## Now what about that band name?

As far as band names go, *Burning Bridget Cleary* has to be one of the more unique ones out there. The moniker's origin stems from a rather insidious tale. At the turn of the 20th century, during a particularly harsh winter, Bridget fell ill with a high fever and wasn't feeling herself. Her husband incited an angry mob of local townsfolk and convinced them that Bridget had been overtaken by a fairy changeling. It remains one of the more gruesome murder cases in Irish history. The legal proceedings resulted in the formal outlawing of witch-hunting in Ireland.

*As you're brainstorming Halloween costumes, I recommend checking out some Irish folklore for a bit of inspiration.*

Meanwhile, Rose also is busy working on a side project called *House of Hamill* with her fiancé Brian Buchanan of *Enter the Haggis*. Their first album, *Wide Awake*, was released on September 17<sup>th</sup>. **PRH**