

**Ghosts of Bannockburn**  
**review by: Becky Huskins**  
**photos: Elizabeth Perkins**



Manchester United was on the telly. Pints of Guinness were on the bar. As the sounds of a sad traditional fiddle began to play, the crowds immediately began to woot. No, this isn't Liverpool, Galway, or Glasgow. It was RiRa Irish Pub and Ghosts of Bannockburn were tuning up for their first set on a cold night back in January.

Will Lewis, lead singer and lead guitarist for Ghosts, is definitely the fighting spirit of this band. Several years ago, he and Gene Mackall (drummer) and Bryant "Train" Nash (bassist) were in another Charlotte psycho-billy band called Slick Shift. That band broke up and then years later added on acoustic guitarist Simon Strivelli and fiddler Chris "PK" Chaney to form Ghosts. I could definitely hear the hard-rocking roots of every guy's band history here. It's comes across as a kick-butt folk rock and punk fusion that is not quite like anything you've heard.

Every guy in the band has traceable roots all the way back across the pond to Scotland (some even over thousands of years). When you see the kilts and hear the voices, you won't have any trouble believing it. Formed back in 2013, the band takes its name from a famous battle in the 13th century while the Scots were working to win their freedom from the English. Many of the songs played by Ghosts of Bannockburn are based on Celtic battle poems and some are from the Irish Republican Army. These songs are public domain and have been covered by many modern bands like The Pogues, Dropkick Murphys, The Dubliners, and Flogging Molly. What this creates is a huge catalog of very recognizable sing-along songs perfect for an Irish pub like RiRa.

Songs like "Scottish Soldier" and "Drunken Sailor" have literally been performed for centuries, but these guys put a modern spin (on it) that really makes you want to celebrate. They even performed "500 Miles" by the '90's group The Proclaimers and all I wished was that my son was old enough to stay up that late to hear it.

And did you know there was such a thing as pirate rock? Me, neither, but I was a believer after I heard "Keelhauled", a cover by a pirate metal band called Alestorm. All I can say is, aaaaarrrrghhh! For a moment, I wasn't sure if I was in the middle of that old Scottish battle, a Sam Adams commercial, or the start of a rough-and-tumble rugby match. One thing was for sure ... it was fun!

As if a siren call of Celtic music was sounding out through the doors, the bar got more and more full as the band played through their sets. There was a lot of swaying with pint glasses, boot tapping, and even a few guys and girls Irish jigging it.

And I defy anyone to not get the song "Will Ye Nae Come Back Again?" stuck in your head for days. I'm just sayin. In talking about their fascination and dedication to their roots, Gene says of Will, "he's the most Celtic guy I know".

Riding on a current high of accolades, Ghosts of Bannockburn were recently awarded the Charlotte Music Award and performed in the Novant Health Thanksgiving Day Parade in Downtown. Given all that, these "boyos" take it all in stride and look forward to their next gigs and having fun with their friends and fans. Look for a new album available at all of their live shows this spring.