

The Scoville Units

Biography

Spring 2012



Originally formed for a one-off show at the 2009 Celtic Connections festival in Glasgow, The Scoville Units couldn't possibly have left it there; they were having too much fun!

The Scoville Units are a collective of six prominent faces from several different corners of the British folk and acoustic music scene. Each member throws in his or her strong musical identity, creating an ensemble that is not only very different but, if you ask those lucky enough to have caught one of their shows, extremely fresh and exciting.

Far from presenting yet another contrived 'new' kind of music, their sound is what naturally happens when a group of gifted and imaginative musicians, with a collective understanding of American, Celtic and English traditional music, play together. The Scoville Units clearly enjoy a healthy appetite for improvisation, alongside a reverential disregard for history, geography and convention.

2011 began on a high with a repeat of their inaugural show at Celtic Connections supporting legendary Dobro player Jerry Douglas, and the release of their debut CD.

Ed Boyd – guitar (Flook, Cara Dillon)

Leon Hunt – banjo (Daily Planet)

Miranda Sykes – double bass and vocals (Show of Hands)

Josh Clark – percussion

Gina Griffin – fiddle and vocals

Rex Preston – mandolin

Press Materials:

For high-resolution images, and other materials visit: www.thescovilleunits.com/downloads

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A bit of background...

It was right after a 2008 festival performance in the heart of the English West-country that **Celtic Connections** artistic director, Donald Shaw hurried backstage and approached banjo player, **Leon Hunt**, about putting together 'something special' for a high-profile concert alongside Béla Fleck as part of his 2009 festival program. Given carte blanche to do whatever he wanted, Leon seized the opportunity to pursue a course that he and guitarist, **Ed Boyd**, had been enjoying for some time whilst occasionally performing together in trad super-group 'Flook' and with Michael McGoldrick. The combination of these internationally renowned Irish musicians, and Leon's improvisational approach to traditional American music, proved a hit and took all involved into surprisingly uncharted musical territory.

When it came to putting the rest of the band together the timing couldn't have been any better: fiddle player, **Gina Griffin**, having worked with Leon in the '90s, had just moved back from France where she'd spent a busy 12 years playing everything from bal-musette to be-bop. On hearing of Gina's return to the area Leon wasted no time in calling her. Gina is not only a world-class fiddle player and singer, she does both at the same time! Her unique unison (and harmony) vocal-scatting to her fiddle improvisation has become a signature element of The Scoville Units' sound.

Rex Preston is without a doubt the most virtuosic mandolin player in the UK today and, as luck would have it, had also just moved to the area to embark on his music degree. Rex won his current mandolin whilst competing at the prestigious US National Instrumental Championships last year.

Long time musical associate of Leon's, percussionist **Josh Clark**, has performed with several notable British acts including Sheelanagig, Daily Planet, James Fagan and the 2000 BBC Young Folk Award winners 'The Black Cat Theory'. With The Scoville Units Josh plays bodhrán and cajón, and an increasingly idiosyncratic array of other percussion instruments.

Later in 2010, after performing on The Scoville Units' debut album as a session musician, Show Of Hands Double-Bassist, **Miranda Sykes**, decided she liked the band so much that she wanted to become a permanent member, an offer they couldn't refuse.

Given the amount of 'hard fun' that went into putting that initial Celtic Connections show together, and it's success on the night, it was never going to end there. The band name was conceived (early shows were as The Leon Hunt *n*-Tet) and new music has been flowing ever since.