

# noCrows

**Steve Wickham: Fiddle**  
**Anna Houston: Cello, Mandolin**  
**Felip Carbonell: Guitar**  
**Eddie Lee: Double Bass**



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**NoCrows** "... a beautifully wrought selection of instrumental music. You can sense the pleasure they find in each other's playing... ".  
**Joe Breen, The Irish Times** - \*\*\*\* review of '**Magpie**' the CD

NoCrows is an awesome foursome of fine musicians based in Sligo, Ireland. Felip Carbonell is a magnificent Mallorcan guitarist and his Flamenco/Manouche-style guitar provides the engine for NoCrows exciting and stylish music. Steve Wickham of 'The Waterboys' is the violinist and his energetic style and repertoire adds spice to the quartet. Anna Houston's Swiss/Celtic roots are apparent in her intricate and soulful playing of the Cello and Mandolin. Eddie Lee provides the hot grooves on his double bass. Their repertoire is truly global as their music ranges from Irish traditional to classical and gypsy swing as well as folk tunes from Finland, Moldova, Russia, Venezuela, Greece and beyond.

NoCrows, though not a traditional Irish group as such, do play Irish music, as well as traditional tunes from all over the world. In fact the group grew very organically in the same way that many Irish traditional groups do – from a regular pub session. This began on Wednesdays in *Shoot the Crows* pub in Sligo some time in 2005. Soon it became apparent to all concerned that something magical was emerging out of the vast array of musical ideas and influences being exchanged from week to week in *Shoot the Crows*: Felip's love of Latin music, particularly Rumba, Steve's unmistakable lilting folk-rock fiddle, Eddie's jazz influences, Anna's classical cello and her love of Irish traditional music.

2009 has been a busy year for NoCrows with major festival appearances including two of Europe's biggest: Glastonbury (UK), Dranouter (Belgium). NoCrows will perform in Belgium, Germany and Switzerland in October and November 2009, capping off the band's most successful year to date.

NoCrows recorded their debut CD September 2006 live at the Strand Bar, Strandhill which was released in early 2007 to critical acclaim. Since their first Irish tour in May 2007, NoCrows have appeared at several Irish festivals and toured Spain, Belgium and Switzerland in 2008. Their willingness to mix and match from such a wide palette, from Brahms to O'Carolan, from trad Irish to Rumba, makes for an enchanting musical experience that often surprises, transporting the listener through a myriad of exotic places.

**MAGPIE.** NoCrows second CD, entitled "Magpie", recorded in early 2008, features original tunes from each band member as well as the band's arrangements of traditional tunes from all over the world. The new CD also features a tune written specially for NoCrows by Dervish's Cathy Jordan; some marvellous Mallorcan music brought to the group by Felip and a beautiful treatment of South American composer Astor Piazzolla's "Chiquilín de Bachín". The CD also features some fantastic guest performances including a couple of gems from Oleg Ponomarev, the Russian violin virtuoso with whom the band has a long association.

## Listen to us

Click on the album cover to listen to some of the tracks on our new album 'Magpie'



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Click on the link or the logo to hear us play live for RTE Radio 1, national Irish Radio ... you'll have to fast forward for nearly 3 min through George W. Bush on the news, though.

**RTE RADIO 1**

[NoCrows live concert for Roots Freeway, RTE Radio 1, Sep 08](#)

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Click on the link or the logo to hear an interview and a few tunes on Radio Rabe, in Bern, Switzerland. No George W. Bush on that one. Interviewer: Bruce Caldwell



[NoCrows interview on Radio Rabe, Bern, Switzerland, Oct 08 \(bilingual Swiss & English\) \(Real Player\)](#)

# Album Reviews

## The Irish Times

THE TICKET THE IRISH TIMES, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2007

### WORLD

#### NO CROWS

At the Strand Live Whirling Discs ★★★★★



The melting pot that is No Crows borrows from the cosmopolitanism of the Penguin Cafe

Orchestra and Loyko's innovations (with just a tincture of the freewheeling of Django Reinhart) for their debut. Sligo-based, and populated by Mallorcan guitarist Felip Carbonell, cellist Anna Houston, double bassist Eddie Lee and Waterboys lynchpin Steve Wickam on fiddle, No Crows tread a jagged-edged and picaresque pathway through a repertoire pinched from across eastern and southern Europe, alighting on Sharon Shannon's Portugese adoptee, *Corridinho*, and making it their own. They achieve a remarkably orchestral sound on *Szhôck*, a slow waltz of puzzling parentage (either Romanian or Bulgarian). What could so easily have been magpie music for those with Attention Deficit Disorder is reined in tight by the quartet's. Swing rarely felt this good. [www.rmgchart.ie](http://www.rmgchart.ie)

Siobhán Long



#### NO CROWS

**Magpie** No Crows ★★★★★

You would want an open mind to get full value from this vibrant second album by an ad hoc quartet formed out of regular sessions at the Sligo pub from which they took their name. Their music, as they say, "ranges from Irish traditional to classical and gypsy swing, as well as folk tunes from Finland, Moldova, Russia, Venezuela, Greece and beyond". In lesser hands, this would

be a recipe for a well-meaning if ham-fisted (sic) turkey, but the hands here are pretty hot – not least violinist Steve Wickam of Waterboys fame. He is joined by exceptional Mallorcan guitarist Felip Carbonell, Anna Houston (cello and mandolin), double bassist Eddie Lee and a number of guests for what is a beautifully wrought selection of instrumental music. You can sense the pleasure they find in each other's playing, but against that, their diversity leaves them short of a signature sound. [www.nocrows.net](http://www.nocrows.net).

JOE BREEN

Download tracks: *Crowswing, Two Black Russians and a Pernod, Magpie*

#### 'Magpie' No Crows review

When I walked into Sligo folk pub Shoot the Crows early in January this year I thought I would get something different but nothing could have prepared me for the musical awakening that awaited me. I was totally bushwhacked by the untamed rhythms, musical ingenuity and, most of all, the sheer unfettered originality of resident group 'No Crows'.

No Crows latest offering 'Magpie' bleeds with creative brilliance and this CD transports us to an almost Dickensian world of musical grandeur. There is astonishing musical range, depth and complexity to the No Crows oeuvre; I firmly believe that they are the most unique group of their kind in Ireland today. I find many shades and moods in No Crows from Ennio Morricone to classical composers and more cultish artists such as Nick Cave. No Crows admit that a lot of the tunes they

play are in minor keys and the mood of some of these tunes is comparable to sombre pieces like John Williams' Schindler's List theme, one that I can imagine No Crows doing justice to.

'Magpie' and the music of No Crows in general might aptly be described as cinematic, for it conjures a veritable array of images; flickering lights and furtive shadows. This would be ideal film score material and its disposition reminds me of several great scores I have come across lately including Johnny Greenwood's exceptional and unsettling work for *There Will Be Blood* and Nick Cave's masterful scoring of *The Assassination of Jesse James by The Coward Robert Ford* (especially the latter). At one of the Shoot the Crows sessions I attended, No Crows played a tune called 'Five to Six/Exit Music For A Film' and it features on the CD. The group semi-joked at the end of another piece that it was like 'Entrance Music For A Film' but I latched onto the observation and I personally would love to hear the music of No Crows in the context of a film soundtrack.

The four members of No Crows come from diverse musical traditions and pastiche their own distinctive talents into the fascinating melting pot that is 'Magpie'. Steve Wickham of The Waterboys, as fine a fiddler as you will ever hear, has never sounded better and his wonderfully tempestuous fiddle playing is a pure treat. Mallorcan Felip Carbonell is a passionate performer who has stamped indelibly the imprint of his own native musical tradition on 'Magpie'. Eddie Lee brings great scale to this work with his distinctive grooves on the double bass. Anna Houston is a gifted multi-instrumentalist whose playing on the cello and mandolin complements perfectly; she is a talented writer too as is evidenced by her titular track 'Magpie'.

No Crows 'Magpie' album possesses a sometimes Hermannesque feel but there is no dearth of upbeat stuff either: 'Mimi's Chorinho' composed by bassist Eddie Lee for his newborn daughter is a musical delight and a surefire toe-tapper.

'Magpie' traverses acres of musical tradition with everything here from a Gregorian chant ('Sa Sibil-la' which Felip learned from his aunt who sang it in Palma Cathedral) to a Greek traditional ('Pernod') and a rare Venezuelan tune ('La Partida'). This is an array of international instrumentals to render the word eclectic virtually redundant. The group's originals are gems too: in Anna Houston's 'Magpie', the traditional roots she shares with

Steve Wickham surface; Wickham's opening salvo 'Crowswing' sees two "duelling fiddles" (his and Russian Oleg Ponomarev's) go to war in a piece that is tantamount to "a Russian bandit tune." The group benefits from the services of an interesting cast of guest musicians, notably Cathy Jordan whose elegiac composition 'Claudia' features as track 2.

I have heard the No Crows session in *Shoot the Crows* aptly described as "world class" by one observer, a description I thoroughly agree with, and the same holds true of this album. The album 'Magpie' would aptly be described as world music, for it represents a fascinating mosaic of musical traditions and influences. This is high concept stuff, full of texture and nuance, that brings you on a mind-expanding musical journey across oceans and continents. 'Magpie' is a handsomely mounted, richly textured album of oceanic depth and dazzling musical range; this is a collection of expertly arranged and lovingly recorded world music.

The stellar front cover artwork by Heidi Wickham, depicting two busy crows, deserves a special mention; this stark but striking painting reminds me of the moody paintings of Caravaggio and matches the mood of the music. A photo of the No Crows members donning masks in a forest on the CD sleeve adds further mystique to this inestimable group.

The music world looks very different since I discovered 'No Crows' – a group that constitute a university of musical excellence. Listening to the album 'Magpie' is like therapy; it is a haunting piece of work and its tunes are timeless and enduring while its creators are endlessly inventive and imaginative. Discovering No Crows lit up the early months of 2009 for me, a time that may otherwise have seemed like a dull and gray wasteland as has been the case for so many. The No Crows repertoire is a well of musical excellence that I know I will draw from again and again.

Marty McCool Music Reviews