There is a Tavern in the Town, and there the Clancys did sit down. The rest—praise be—it recorded history. Three sons of a pub-keeping family from Eire, and a teetotalling ex-crooner from County Armagh in the North of Ireland, have combined to create a vivid extension of the Irish Renaissance, and they’re just as soon you came along for the ride. It’s entirely possible that they’ll convert the entire world to their cheerfully irresistible brand of chauvinism, excepting perhaps the English, whom they glibly lambast at the slightest provocation... or none. It is, after all, perhaps the English, whom they gleefully lambast at

None of them can, and that is part of their fascination. You must accept them as human beings first and last, and not as mere performers to be enjoyed, applauded and dismissed. Tom Clancy parleys a roaring baritone from a manly chest, with a face that is the original map of his homeland. He specializes in leading the way on the stir-em-up numbers, yet he can be very moving in simple lament for the myriad of Ireland’s shattered causes.

I’ve said elsewhere that Liam looks like the handsome, smiling devil of a lad who usually dies gallantly and beautifully in the next-to-last reel of the derring-do film, and whose proud and smiling face is superimposed on the clouds, as his pals in the regiment, to the tune of Garry Owen, march splendidly off the screen to Glory. His voice can caress like the lazy humming of a bee in the next garden... but he can sting like a bee, as well, when he turns to consider the iniquities of Albion.

This is an effort to separate the Significant (often hard to find from the Inconsequential (usually available instantly) in ten of the music that is the most direct expression of the way people really think, feel and are. There are essences of culture and individual truth that words cannot convey, but which flourish in the yeasty soil of spontaneous song, and can be shared by theperceptive.

Consider the special magic of the Gaelic: from Ireland come the voice and harp of Mary O’Hara, more pure than the water of any brook, but with a brisk and brave spirit, and a grasp of ordinary mortality. Even when he sings softly, a sonorous bass-baritone can shake the chair on which you sit, as well as the pit of your stomach, and it brings an actor’s truth to every song, a projection of reality that is larger than life, yet pulses with it.

They are something apart, when it comes to the singing aspect of song. Only Pete Seeger has an equivalent magic for getting a room full of strangers to roar at songs they’d never heard before. Today, the Clancys and the Makems are the living proof that you don’t have to dirty your art in order to become professional and successful. At the present time they’ve become popular in some of the first-rate night clubs in the country, as well as in the Folk Music rooms. They sing the same songs that they sang in the White Horse, with the same feeling and conviction, but a year of appearing before audiences of every kind has sharpened their presentation, and improved their singing to the point where they have become my favorite act, not only in the Folk World, but in all the worlds of entertainment.

Their development can be fascinatingly traced as Tradition recordings. Start with The Lark in the Morning in which both Liam and Tommy Makem can be heard before they left Ireland, along with Tommy’s mother who, like the Clancy’s mother, is a treasure trove of the old songs and the main source of the boys’ repertoire. Then hear The Rising of the Moon and revolutionary songs recorded in the early White Horse days, followed by Come Fill Your Glass with Us, from the same milieu, and then to Tommy Makem’s solo record, and a group effort that just bears their names on the label, and reflects their development after months of singing to Folkways and Columbia coffee shops in New York. Then get their magnificent opus to date, a record that was made by Columbia in its New York studios with some two hundred of the Clancy faithful in riotous attendance. My friends tell me that there was a three-hour bash around the Jereboams of Paddy’s Irish Whiskey before a note was put on tape, and my heart is still sore that a mere 3,000 miles separation made me miss the fun. I got the record that came out of it, and most of the fun is there. Better still, Columbia tells me they’ll have another one on its way. Sleanté!