

SHAMROCK 'N' ROLL

The sounds of the Emerald Isle have long dominated rock's charts

411 By Charles Beacham

Making it in the music business takes more than talent and hard work, it often takes luck. One might look at the number of chart-topping rock artists from Ireland and conclude there's something to that whole four-leaf clover thing. The Emerald Isle is no stranger to the world of rock 'n' roll.

Van Morrison is considered by many to be the father of Irish Rock. "The Belfast Cowboy" fell in love with rock music as a teenager playing in Irish showbands and covering popular dance songs of the '50s and '60s.

A six-time Grammy Award winner, Morrison has written some of history's most well-known pop rock hits. His songs "Moondance" and "Brown Eyed Girl" were included in The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's exhibit "Songs that Shaped Rock and Roll." In 1993 he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and in 2003 was inducted into the Songwriters' Hall of Fame.

Thin Lizzy, a Dublin-based band best known for their hit song "The Boys Are Back In Town," was formed when Eric Bell and Eric Wrixon, former members of Irish band Them, met bassist and frontman Phil Lynott. This new band made their mark with harmonizing guitar lines and Lynott's unique vocal stylings. Though original members Wrixon and Bell both left the band before the group gained any huge success, they helped create one

of the most influential rock bands of Irish origin.

Another Irish group has been called the biggest band in the world, and rightly so. After nearly 40 years together, U2, the Dublinites that gave us "Vertigo," are still writing, recording and performing their music all over the world.

U2 got their start in 1976 when drummer Larry Mullen Jr. pinned a note reading "musicians wanted" on the bulletin board at his school. Mullen, then 14, found exactly what he was looking for: Three of the six respondents were vocalist Paul Hewson (aka Bono), guitarist David "The Edge" Evans and bassist Adam Clayton. The original lineup of the band also included Evans' older brother Dik on guitar.

In their early years the band played under the name Feedback and, later, The Hype. When Dik Evans left the band to focus on school they changed their name to

U2 and the legend was born.

A stroke of Irish luck and a knack for performance helped the band win a battle of the bands held in Limerick, Ireland, on Saint Patrick's Day, 1978. The prize for winning the competition was £500 and paid studio time. The band used their winnings to record their first demo tape, "Three." Two years later the band was signed to Island Records.

In their time together the band has recorded 12 albums, played almost 1,300 live shows and in 2005 were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame for their contribution as performers. To date, the band has won 22 Grammy Awards and are tied with Stevie Wonder as the winningest artists in the history of the award.

Nearly 40 years have passed since U2's inception and they are still rocking on. Bono and The Edge wrote the music for the Broadway



Chart-topping artists from Ireland include U2, Thin Lizzy and Snow Patrol.

show "Spider-man: Turn Off the Dark," and the band is currently working on a new album with acclaimed producer Danger Mouse. And, in all of this, the group has had no line up changes.

While Morrison, Thin Lizzy and U2 have made significant marks on the music scene, they aren't the only musicians to hail from the Emerald Isle. Ireland continues to crank out some of the most successful international acts of the day, including Snow Patrol, Damien Rice and The Script.