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Celtic Pagan Music saved by Technology, Creativity and Belief

Technology is now an integral part of everyone's day-to-day life. After the industrial revolution (mid 1700s) and the digital revolution (late 1950s) our lives have been significantly improved. People are healthier, communication is easier, transportation is safer and the world is improving and becoming a better place to live. But these improvements have also changed the way we view and enjoy arts. Advancing technology also brought us many new forms of arts like graffiti (spray can), game arts (mobile/ web/ VR), 3D animations (games, movies, VR), sculptures (3D printing), etc. But technology has also shown us, both the better and the worst sides of it. With all these technological advancements people are forgetting old cultures and their art forms.

Most people today are more familiar with native ancient traditions of the different cultures of the world, but barely of Europe. The Native American tradition, the tribal religions of Africa, the sophistication of Hindu belief and practice and the more recently revived Japanese tradition, Shinto, are widely acknowledge as the authentic native animistic tradition of their respective areas. In marked contrast, the European native tradition, from the massive civilizations of Greece and Rome to the barely documented tribal systems of the Picts, the Finns and other norther margins of the continent, has seen as having been obliterated totally. The

people forgotten here, are the Celtic pagans. Their culture was superseded first by Christianity and Islam and, more recently, by post-Christian humanism. (J.Prudence, and N. Pennick)

The Celtic pagans or the Celts were the people in Iron Age of Western Europe before the expansion of Roman Empire and Christianity. This culture is theorized to be emerged from Austria and flourished over western and central Europe including British Isles, France, Iberian Peninsula, northern Italy, Switzerland etc. Pagans are deeply aware of the natural world and see the power of the divine in the ongoing cycle of life and death. The recognition of the divine in nature is at the heart of Pagan belief. Most Pagans are eco-friendly, seeking to live in a way that minimizes harm to the natural environment. (Pagan Beliefs) Like other cultures, they had their own arts and music. Arts that expressed their beliefs, that reflected their lives and songs about their gods, family and culture. But with Roman invasion, those form of arts were lost.

But thanks to the advancement in technology, people now are getting more informed about this forgotten culture and art. With the availability of recording studios, the descendants of Celts are now recording their music along with their traditional musical instruments like fiddle, hurdy-gurdy, bagpipe, lute, etc. These songs can now be heard in places more than in just some Irish pubs. The influence of Celtic folk music was later seen in the metal community as well. Metal genre became one of the medium for this forgotten culture to spread around the world. Metal bands incorporating ancient melodies to their songs are not new. During the late 1980s, metal bands like Manowar, Bathory and Amon Amarth recorded songs about Vikings and Norse mythology. In the early 1990s, bands like Eluveitie (Switzerland), Mägo de Oz (Spain), Suidakra (Germany), Arkona (Russia), etc. started representing themselves as Celtic Folk Metal Bands. But these bands didn't just use the regular musical instruments. They used ancient Celtic folk instruments like bagpipes, hurdy-gurdy, tin whistle, harp, bodhrán, etc. with guitars and drums to

create their songs. It might seem absurd combining head-banging heavy metal music with soothing Celtic folk melodies, but as surprising as to many new listeners, they sounded better than the tradition metal songs. I personally feel that their songs are more calming and empowering at the same time. These bands also write songs on old Celtic and Gaulish languages. (Eluveitie - Slania's Song with Lyrics & Translation) Due to this influence, many people have stated showing interest in this almost extinct language, even though the translations are limited. But it's not just the melody and language that they incorporate, they also sing songs about Celtic gods, their brave warriors and stories of their battles fought. One great example is a song "Inis Mona" by "Eluveitie", where they talk about the island where the most relevant druid college of the Celtic world was established. (Eluveitie - Inis Mona) Selling thousands of cd's, their popularity has helped Celtic folk music to flourish all over the globe, as people from different parts of the world (from south America, US, Europe to South Asia) collaborate to create cover songs and videos. (Eluveitie - Inis Mona- Collab Cover) This is all made possible by creative people, their beliefs and technology to record and distribute music.

Some people might think that technology has killed arts or caused people to lose creativity, but technology has contributed a lot on the field of arts. Technology has created new forms of music and arts, and it has also aided on saving the traditional ones. It has not hindered but has definitely helped the music of Celtic Pagans. These type of extraordinary combination of music genre has triggered a chain reaction throughout the world. Now there are Mongolian Folk Metal bands, Arabic Folk Metal bands, Indian Folk Metal bands and so on, all trying to spread their traditional music with a kick of metal genre. (18 Styles of Folk Metal From Around the World)

References:

- J.Prudence, and N. Pennick. "A History of Pagan Europe." Routledge, 1995, retrieved from books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=7QRUAQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=pagan+history&ots=cD5vYh7cds&sig=R1WtTDe2_wGawExhFyXfmJSrxVI#v=onepage&q&f=true.
- "Pagan Beliefs." *BBC*, www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/paganism/beliefs/beliefs.shtml. Updated on 2 Oct. 2002.
- "Eluveitie - Inis Mona (Official Music Video)." *YouTube*, uploaded by Nuclear Blast Records, 30 Jan. 2008, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijjKLHCQw5o
- "Eluveitie - Inis Mona- Collab Cover." *YouTube*, uploaded by Hylianmusik, 1 June 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5jKhbsDj2c
- " Eluveitie - Slania's Song with Lyrics & Translation " *YouTube*, uploaded by TheMetalPenguin, 30 Jan. 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMnaO0yKhyE>
- "18 Styles of Folk Metal from Around the World" *YouTube*, uploaded by Metal Maestro, 23 Apr, 2015, https://youtu.be/pV_vRC0FnHk

More Audio/ Video References:

- Song with ancient Gaulish lyrics, "Eluveitie Unplugged – Brictom"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RniwGaZl83c>
- Gaelic Storm, Irish Celtic band spreading their cultural music in the traditional fashion. "Gaelic Storm - The Samurai Set"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZCuS8CvAsI>
- Heavy metal cover(Eluveitie) of classical song, In the Hall of the Mountain King by Edvard Grieg, skip to 30sec.
"Eluveitie - In the Hall of the Mountain King"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jg6s2gqd9pI>
- Heavy metal song(Sabatón) about Norse god Thor and his journey "Sabatón - Twilight Of The Thundergod"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cDa7yZeci8>