



**Tiller's Folly's new CD, *A River So Wide*, is excellent, says Province music writer John P. McLaughlin. The band's knack for attracting outstanding talent is still evident.**

# Everyone wants in with Tiller's Folly

**CLASS ACT:** Band's rep gets the pros on board

## In concert

### Tiller's Folly

**Where:** Surrey Arts Centre and the ACT in Maple Ridge

**When:** Tomorrow night in Surrey at 8; Saturday night in Maple Ridge at 8

**Tickets:** \$23-\$26 for Surrey at 604-501-5566; \$20 to \$22.50 for Maple Ridge at 604-476-2787

BY JOHN P. MCLAUGHLIN  
MUSIC REPORTER

Bassist Laurence Knight was once a fixture in the Vancouver music scene and had played with everyone from Doucet, Shari Ulrich and Roy Forbes to Jim Byrnes, Al Foreman and Long John Baldry. A diverse career by any standard. Then one day he woke up, realized he'd had enough and quit. If you're not selling platinum, music as a career choice can be a brutal grind, especially playing the bars. Knight became a real-estate appraiser.

But old habits die hard and 10 years ago he started checking out this acoustic/Celtic band that old friend and singer/songwriter Bruce Coughlan was putting together with a couple of other players called Tiller's Folly. From the start, this was to be a recording-and-touring act and, like an old sailor uncomfortable with extended shore leave, Knight packed a rucksack and came aboard.

So have a lot of others over the years, some amazing local players, like Mike Sanyshyn, a brilliant fiddler, and great drummers like Shawn Soucy, Geoff Eyre and Phil Robertson. Robbie Steininger is one of the most dazzling, tasteful guitar players I've ever heard anywhere. He was in Tiller's Folly for a while. It seems to be that kind of band.

Ten years and 11 albums later, the nub of the band is Knight and Coughlan with champion fiddler Nolan Murray, who joined six years ago. They work hard, these guys, something like 250 dates a year, and bring along drum-

mer Chris (The Wrist) Nordquist when they can. Like in Scotland. They spent three weeks in August over there, part of it playing the prestigious Speyfest up north in Fochabers village by the River Spey, in the shadow of Gordon Castle. It seems they went over well.

"Yeah, it's getting to be a really big festival and everybody told us we blew 'em away this year," says Knight. "They had 1,500 people there both nights screaming and yelling. We wrote them a song called 'Ceilidh by the Spey' for our CD in 2005, which is now the theme song for the festival."

Everywhere they go these days Tiller's Folly is promoting their newest release, the excellent *A River So Wide*. Their penchant for attracting outstanding talent has never been more pronounced than on this project.

In order to co-produce with Knight, they managed to snag Steven Drake (Spirit of the West, Tragically Hip, Nellie Furtado), and helping Coughlan out with vocals is John Cowan, formerly a member of the influential New Grass Revival, with the likes of Sam Bush and Bela Fleck. Nolan made that connection at the Folk Alliance in Austin, Tex.

But the stunner name on the CD sleeve has to be keyboardist Larry Knechtel, a music legend. He started out in Duane Eddy's band, The Rebels. He played on all those old Phil Spector hits like "Be My Baby." That lovely piano track on Simon & Garfunkle's "Bridge Over Troubled Water?" Larry Knechtel. He played bass on the Byrds' "Mr. Tambourine Man." He played with the Beach Boys.

"When we were in the studio recording with him," says Knight, "while we were just taking a break, he played 'God Only Knows' on a big grand piano. We just wished we had the tape rolling. We met him through his son, Lonnie, a musician in the Bellingham, Wash., scene and Nolan lives in Blaine now and started meeting people down there. The thing that's really encouraging is these guys really love our music, everybody's trying to help."

### TILLER'S FOLLY *A River So Wide* (tillersfolly.com)

This is the 11th release for the Vancouver Celtic/roots trio. There's some fine playing and very good songwriting on here, none better than "The Things I Haven't Done." See them at the Surrey Arts Centre Friday or the ACT in Maple Ridge Saturday. **B** —J.P.M.

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