

RUN, DON'T WALK

You should run, not walk, in the other direction if any one or more of the following conditions is present at the session you're visiting for the first time:

% A super-star (e.g. Liz, Joanie, Frankie) is there.

% Someone who *thinks* he's a super-star is there.

% The pub owner seems to have a thing for leprechauns.

% The 12-year-old autoharp-playing quadruplets from the next town show up and are warmly welcomed by the others.

% Eight of the twelve musicians sitting at the table have tune-books open in front of them. There are two others trying to play from what appear to be Pizza Hut take-out menus. Oddly enough, they seem to be the only ones playing the tunes correctly.

% Alfred, the tone-deaf florist who specializes in attempting to sing John McCormack songs, grabs the seat next to yours and introduces himself with a limp handshake.

% There are three mikes, two speakers, one monitor, and 21 chairs. The sound system is owned/controlled by the Alpha Musician and the others seem grateful for his "assistance".

% Everyone pretends NOT to know the names of any tunes.

% There's a semi-professional Pun Vendor in attendance who doesn't play much but makes many stupid comments.

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% The Alpha Musician refuses to play "Haste to the Wedding" or "The Boys of Blue Hill" but can imitate (badly and continuously) every reel Martin Hayes ever played while his victims pretend to be entranced.

% The local bodhrán instruction group adjourns from its weekly class just in time for its students to make it across town to this particular session.

% Three members of the local Angry Feminist Poetry Sisterhood are preparing to inflict their most recent works on everyone during anything that looks like a break in the music.

% You start to play something and two people down at the other end of the table start to giggle uncontrollably.

% You start to play something and YOU start to giggle uncontrollably.

% You get up to take a leak and find your whistle stuffed with feta cheese when you return. Everyone feigns innocence but no one offers to help you remove the cheese.

% You tentatively join in on a tune, and the Alpha Musician stops and glares at you until you stop playing. The music does not resume until you have put your instrument on the table and have placed your hands on top of your head. You never get the sliding microphone again, ever.

% The cute redheaded flute player who you swear winked at you when you came in turns out to be a transvestite pipe-fitter named Shank.

% Three of the local Celtic (Hard C) Dance Cooperative members attempt an eight-hand reel while you're playing the "Kesh Jig". They get a big hand from audience and musicians alike when they finish.

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% A fuzz-cheeked youth who has been playing whistle for all of two months and knows exactly three and a half tunes makes a face when you suggest a slide or a polka. He mutters something about "not really traditional" but emits an audible sigh of relief when the gang swings into "Planxty Irwin".

% The box player once took lessons from someone who once took lessons from someone who once took lessons from someone who once sat four chairs away from Joe Burke at a session in Loughrea. For this reason she is treated with great reverence in spite of not possessing a whole lot of obvious talent.

% An older couple in kilts spend twenty minutes singing some Scots ditty with a name like "Whaur the Grewshanks I' The Bidderwochtie". You find out during the applause that she's a quarter Scots and he's third-generation Slovenian. They have never visited Scotland but are planning to, maybe next year.

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Do NOT attempt to deal with any of these issues by yourself. Remove yourself from the premises, take a solemn vow never to return, and spend the rest of the evening trying to find a Dunkin' Donuts. (If you're in New England, you may substitute a Shoney's for a DD.)

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