Luck of the Irish

Irish Music Festival

By AISHA SELF

I "The Park Record"

Imagine if St. Patrick's Day in Park City was 75 degrees and sunny. This weekend, Toby Martin of Park City Concerts and Rick Butler of local Irish band Swagger are delivering the next best thing.

The two forces are joining together to bring the inaugural Irish Music Festival to Deer Valley's Snow Park Outdoor Amphitheater on Sunday, Aug. 1, from noon until 8 p.m. The celebration will feature live music, close to 40 performers, traditional Irish fare and of course, plenty of Guinness.

The festival is something Butler has wanted to bring to Park City for a couple of years. He has been eyeing potential venues and crafting his vision since he moved to Utah, but it wasn't until he started working with Martin, executive director of Park City Concerts, that he was able to nail down the details.

The band lineup for the festival includes local favorites Swagger; Irish tribute band The Wailing O'Sheas; the recently reunited Slaymaker Hill; Celtic ska band The California Celts and headliners The Young Dubliners.

"This kind of music you don't hear on the radio every day," Butler says. "There's a lot of storytelling involved and a lot of energy in this music that other types of music don't have. It's something you have to go to a festival to get the gist of."

According to Keith Roberts, co-founder, vocalist and guitarist for The Young Dubliners, Irish festivals in the United States have become more numerous and more popular than they are in Ireland.

The festivals started as a way for Irish-Americans to gather together and celebrate traditions of the homeland, Roberts says, but the appeal has expanded beyond Irish transplants to a much larger demographic. Roberts, a native of Dublin, started The Young Dubliners with fellow Irishman Brendan Holmes in the late '80s. They are joined by three American-born members who have wholeheartedly embraced Irish music and culture. "We're working on developing their Irish accents every day," Roberts says.

The group plays original music as well as cover songs paying tribute to Irish bands. They draw from various influences.

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