

Tri Yann at St David's Hall

# A new boost for the old tunes

By IFAN PAYNE

**REVIEW**

TRI YANN is a high-tech electronic Breton Folk Group with a sophistication and professionalism of presentation that is second to none.

Between them the six members of the group play about 24 instruments which range from electric dulcimer and shawm to electronic synthesiser.

If you know the album of fellow countryman Alan Stiveil you will recognise the style.

There's a gut-hard, driving, rhythmic music which takes timeless folk tunes and displays them anew, as relevant today as they ever were. The group spans the centuries not only with the contemporary presentation of old music, but also by mixing in their own contemporary songs of protest: against the nuclear age, against the age of bulldozing environmental destruction.

For this is a deeply-committed group socially as well as musically. They sing with ancient voices of new horrors and of timeless concern for life, liberty and love.

Songs like *Petite Silvestik* are magnificently-produced folk-based showpieces, combining words,

pictures and music. Indeed projected slides, and often English sub-titles, were used throughout, creating in a battering-ram of a song like *Bulldozer* a stunning montage of sound effects, voices, instruments, lighting and pictures.

A committed song like that was typically followed by the quieter, ancient lonely sound of a traditional song or dance like the *Dance of the Marriage Horse*.

## Satiric

It is not, incidentally, surprising that there is more than a hint of Kate Bush (or vice-versa) in those electronically-processed Breton dances.

Tri Yann is also funny, satiric, and by turn poignant and gaily rhythmic. Tri Yann is a virtuosic folk-rock group of relevant and vibrant musicality and on Monday evening it presented an exciting, well-rehearsed programme of high quality music which has ensured the success of the French Fortnight at St David's Hall, whatever else happens.