The Button Accordion in Irish Traditional Music –

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The Single Row Button Accordion (Melodeon) became popular in Irish music in the early in the early 20th century.

These instruments were available, cheap and easy to play. They also had plenty of volume which made them suitable providing music for house dances before the advent of amplification.

About 1920, recordings made in USA of accordion player Peter Conlon increased the interest in the instrument.

When two row models became available most musicians opted for instruments tuned to C#D or D/D# which were similar to the previous single row Melodeons.

During the 1940's musicians explored playing instruments tuned to B/C. This meant fingering across the rows to play in the Key of D. (The most common key for traditional tunes). The B/C system produced a much smoother effect and allowed for ornamention possibilities that mimiced the pipes and fiddle.

Listeners and musicians were attracted to this new sound. **Paddy O'Brien** of Nenagh Co Tipperary was one of the first great exponents of this system and popularised it through recordings and Fleadh Competitions during the 1950's.

The trend was continued by **Joe Burke** from Co. Galway who took first place in the Fleadh of 1959 and 1960.

The B/C accordion style has taken honours in **almost all Fleadh Competition**s for the past 60 year and is still the most popular style.

C#D and Meleodeon style did survive in the gaeltacht areas of Cork, Kerry and Galway.

Joe Cooley from Co, Galway was a very famous player of the C#D style and this his playing style has been preserved by people like **Tony McMahon, Jackie Daly and Mick Mulcahy** and others.

Listen to the following B/C players:

Joe Burke, Annette Owens, Josephine Marsh, Danny O'Mahoney and Oliver Diviney,

Listen to the following C#D players:

Joe Cooley, Fiachna O'Mongain, Mary Staunton, Jackie Daly and Dermot Byrne.

Learn to play some tunes on both systems to appreciate the different effects.