

## Purcell and Begley team up for concert in Honeyfizz theatre

KATE Purcell performs with Brendan Begley in the Honeyfizz Theatre, Lough Gur, on Sunday May 23 at 8pm.

The Ennis based singer's captivating voice lends itself equally to traditional, Irish folk, Blues and American country music and she has played extensively around Ireland, Europe and the USA.

Brendan and Kate have performed together in the past, and the combination has been hugely successful on Kate's album 'I fall to pieces'.

Brendan's music is bursting with the wild beauty of West Kerry. As a singer he is a gentle giant. On the accordion, he is a force of nature. His music, he says, could not exist were it not for the elements of his native Dingle Peninsula.

Born into a famous musical family, the youngest of nine children, Brendan soaked up the music and song of West Kerry from an early age. Slides, polkas, songs and slow airs all run through his veins.

He has three acclaimed solo albums to his name, as well as numerous recordings with the groups Boys



Kate Purcell renews her association with Brendan Begley at Honeyfizz

of the Lough and Beginish. With the Boys of the Lough, he has toured extensively throughout the United States, and has been featured repeatedly on the Garrison Keilor Show.

Along with his family Brianainn, Cormac and Clíodhna he took part in Celtic Colours in October of 2009 and the first Cuban Celtic festival alongside Liam Ó Maonlaí of Hot-house Flowers and Carlos Nunes from the Basque regions of northern Spain.

Tickets €20. Bookings 087 285 2022 or via email: Honeyfizz@loughgur.com or details on www.loughgur.com

# Don takes centre stage

He is one of the most sought-after songwriting talents in the world, but Limerick's Don Mescall is now keeping some of the good stuff for himself, as we will find out at his Absolute Hotel gig this Sunday, writes **Kevin Corbett**

IT MIGHT sound like a line from a sci-fi potboiler, but Don Mescall got the last flight out of Heathrow before the ash cloud closed off Irish airspace.

"Mother Nature, she's striking back," says the songwriter who is back in his native Limerick for a special show this Sunday night in the Absolute Hotel. He spends more than his fair share of time in the air - far too much for his liking.

"Based between UK and Nashville? Yeah," he says, and wonders if he can say he's based anywhere at all.

"I've a daughter in the UK so I come as often as I can and spend some time with her. I try not to be away for too long at a time. I do a month in Nashville and come back for three or four weeks.

"I'm trying to change that part of my life because the travel will kill you in the end. The whole time zone thing is a bit of a nightmare, because I'm not the best sleeper anyway."

But he has a plan there. Having spent the last seven years in and around the music business hub that is Nashville, Tennessee, he has built up relationships with writers and artists he has worked with. Soon



Songwriting star Don Mescall plays the Absolute Hotel this Sunday in an unplugged style

he hopes the mountain will come to Mohammed.

"I've just bought a place in Kilkenny and my plan would be to invite some of those writers and artists over to a studio I'm building and I wouldn't have to be going away all the time, put down some roots for the first time in my life."

Until that is ready, however, he will still be spending most of his time in Nashville where his skills as a songwriter are very much in demand.

The list of artists who have had success with his songs is long and diverse including the likes of Rascal Flatts, Boyzone, Backstreet Boys, Frances Black and many more.

"Nashville is a very vibrant music business town and a lot of the writers, artists and publishers

are there," says Don.

"If someone is making a record, the majority of the best session musicians in the world are there, they really are. So for a songwriter, of course, that's your way in, you're trying to get songs on those records, so it's the right place to be."

Songwriters like Don have been fuelling the fame of artists for decades and you'd wonder is there a part of him saying 'that glory should be mine'.

"No, not really. The exciting part for me is writing the songs, I've always loved writing. I write all the time, so when your song goes to an artist and they have a lot of success with it, it's like putting a child out into the world, you're happy for it.

So successful has he

been at the songwriting, it has all but swallowed his own singing career. It has been four years since his well-received debut Innocent Run and bar a couple of EP releases and a show here and there, Don's performing life has been on hold.

"What happened with me was I got caught up in the songwriting. I made a record four years ago for an American label and I promoted that. Then the songwriting thing took off in a big way and it's like a rollercoaster, it's difficult to get off it, because if you're having success then your manager and your publisher will keep putting in co-writes and requests for people recording albums wanting to work with you.

"So, it wasn't a con-

scious decision that I was going to give up performing, but the songwriting just took over for a while and I found myself writing in America all the time and the performance side of it dwindled.

"But then last year I made a new album in Nashville with Doug Lancia. I'm just finishing it. Doug had produced a lot of the albums that I loved with people like Patty Griffin and Nanci Griffith, so to work with him was a dream come true. We worked together for about two months and recorded maybe 15 songs with some of my favourite players playing on it.

"Then things started getting busy and I had to put it on the back burner. Now I'm recording and mixing the last maybe three or four tracks. I'm excited about it, it's a record I've been waiting to do for a long time.

"So the plan," he laughs, "or I'm told my plan is, when this record comes out I'm going to concentrate on the whole performance side of it."

To that end a slot supporting Ronan Keating on his recent UK and Ireland tour has helped get Don's eye back in.

"They were sold out venues, four or five thousand people every night, and I loved it. I hadn't played in so long and it was great to get back up in front of people and play new songs, and that gave me the spur to get the record finished.

"Performing is what I started out doing and it has a big place in my heart. What I'm doing now is getting back into performing. I've a lot of work done on the songwriting, so my publishers have been kind enough to give me time to get this record out and that's what I'll do.

"I think also I wear two hats. There's a type of song, possibly, that I write for America and for commercial records and I think there is another song I write for myself that's more intimate and personal and I guess there are similar ingredients in both types of song, but I tend to perform and write songs that are slightly different

for myself."

Of course, as with some numbers on his debut album, these songs often get covered in any case.

"Yeah, they're the ones that slip through the net, I'm trying to hold on to a few of them for this record, I really am, that's sort of funny.

"There's a song I'm putting on my new record and I remember after doing this thing in Nashville a couple of months ago my publisher was saying 'give me that, I want to try that out with Alison Krause' and I said, 'hang on, I want to put that on my own record'."

"Not that I wouldn't love an Alison Krause cut, but let me put it out first!"

Don returns to the studio next week to work on the final three or four tracks on his album to be called 'The Growing Years' which he expects to be out at the end of the summer. With some talented guests singing on it he's excited about it and it represents a departure from the Nashville sound of his debut.

"This album is very stripped back, very acoustic-based and it's very much like what I do live, some tracks with added instruments and we went for live takes too. It's not polished like Innocent Run was, this is loose and raw, that's how I like to keep it.

"I'm always trying out new songs. In the Absolute, it's going to be a slightly different show, it's going to be more intimate. I'm going to be picking early songs and later ones and it's solo. Just myself and a few guitars, kind of like an Unplugged thing. I'm going to be telling people about the songs and I'm looking forward to it."

Maybe if the ash cloud hangs around for a while we might keep him here to do a few more

Don Mescall plays the Absolute Hotel on Sunday night, May 9 from 8.30 pm. For those interested in making a night of it there is a special pre-gig four-course dinner at €24.95, or 2 people at €60 including bottle of wine. Ticket reservation: 061 463600

## Musical fans in for big treat at LIT

THE magic of the great musicals returns to the LIT Millennium Theatre, Limerick on Saturday, May 22, with its brand new 2010 show bringing the glitz and the glamour from the West End stage and the bright lights of Broadway.

This sell-out electric production of musical showstoppers has been voted one of the best touring shows by Theatre Managers from all around the UK and the person behind 'Mad About Productions' Michael Courtney, was nominated the UK 'Producer Of The Year'.

'Mad About The Musicals' will provide a two-hour extravaganza of unforgettable musical numbers allowing you to enjoy the great moments of the classic shows in one evening complete with singers from London, top notch dancing, spectacular lighting and glitzy costumes bringing a pure slice of entertainment.

Transporting you on a whistle stop tour into the heart of London's theatre land the show contains over 20 of your favourite musicals such as 'Les Miserables', 'Phantom Of The Opera', 'Miss Saigon', 'Cabaret', 'Billy Elliot', 'Oliver', 'Wicked' and many more musical classics.

Joining this West End cast are 24 children from the local CentreStage Theatre School run by Richie Ryan. They will be taking part in two sections of the show, Oliver and Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and have been busy rehearsing for the past month.

The additional ingredient that will make this show a night to remember is the hilarious comedy that runs throughout the performance. An array of songs from Avenue Q, Little Shop Of Horrors and Annie Get Your Gun are funny enough to warrant a show all of their own.

Saturday, May 22, at 8pm  
Tickets: €26 / Conc. €24  
(Booking fee applies)  
Booking: 061 322322 / www.litmt.ie

**DANCING RATHKEALE HOUSE HOTEL**  
Sun 9th  
Declan Angier

**OB's Kilross**  
Sat 8th  
Paddy O'Brien  
Sun 9th  
Liam O'Sullivan  
Coming Sat 15th  
Thomas & Fiona

**KNOCKADERRY COMMUNITY CENTRE**  
Sat 8th  
Tony Bird

**Charleville Park Hotel**  
Limerick Road  
Charleville  
(063) 81600  
Sun 9th  
Tony Stevens  
Sunday 16th  
Gary Gamble & Kim Dickenson  
Special Dance Patrons Offer  
Stay over night in Hotel For  
Only 35.00 pp, including  
Breakfast

**AHERN'S Bunkley**  
Newport, Phone (061) 377161  
Sat 8th  
Peter Bourke  
Sun 9th  
Peter lane

**Phone (069) 83043 ADULT DANCING**  
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**FRIARS GATE KILMALLOCK Tel: 063 98727**  
Sat 8th @ 8pm Gearard Logan in the rape of Lucrece by William Shakespeare

Thur 13th May @ 8pm..Womens Voices...Womens Stories, Noirin Ni Riain, Cora Fenton & Eileen Sheehan

BOOKINGS TEL: (063) 98727  
Email: www.friarsgate.ie

**The Greenwood Inn**  
Ardpatrick. Phone: (063) 91261  
Sat 8th Dick Cashman  
Sun 9th Sea Breeze  
Mon 10th Set Dancing  
Wed 12th Declan Aungier

**Greenhills Hotel**  
Ennis Road, Limerick  
"Ireland's Top Thursday Night Dance"  
Thursday 6th May Nathan Carter  
Thursday 13th May John McNicholl  
Tel 061 - 453033

## A culture of artistic innovation hits Catherine Street - you gotta dig it!

Alan Owens

THE HALF kilometre stretch of Catherine Street that runs right through the heart of Limerick city centre is to come alive with music, arts and performance events next weekend as the Catherine Street Culture Dig (CATDIG) street festival takes place.

The three-day festival is the brainchild of the Spirit Store Arts Group, who transformed the Sarsfield Bar from abandoned pub into a bustling hub of creative and artistic creativity last year.

Now, frustrated with the description of Limerick city centre as dying and empty, the group have turned their attention to Catherine Street and have collaborated with the business and shop owners to come up with a truly innovative street festival.

The organisers behind the festival are Marilyn Lennon, lecturer in Digital Media in the Limerick School of Art and Design, and Paul Tarpey, Limerick-based writer, DJ and photographer, both of whom were centrally involved in the Sarsfield Bar project.

"Catherine Street is owned by people who have probably had businesses there for three generations, butchers, bakers and many unique shops, so we made our application to Ev+A based on the fact that we wanted to do this cultural dig here," explains Marilyn.

"The whole process is the art, the meetings, people talking, getting to know each other - we have a documented survey of the businesses, how they can facilitate events, and we have a list of performers,



Artists Sinead Dinneen and Eilish Tuite, Marilyn Lennon, Director of Spirit Store, Paul Tarpey, Director of Spirit Store, Stephen Neary, Artist, Faber Studios, Catherine Street and Niall Bourke, Bourke's Bar, Catherine Street launch the Catherine Street Culture Dig

practitioners and artists," adds Paul.

For one weekend, artists, musicians, dancers, writers, performers, historians, researchers and butchers, bakers, publicans, coffee merchants, drapers, food vendors, haberdashers, and book sellers are turning the street into one very long unusual venue, hosting a bubbling cornucopia of events, workshops, installations and performances.

Shop-spaces, shop-fronts, studios, pavements, public rooms, archways and basements will all be transformed to host free events all weekend.

Expect to see a giant parcel passed through the street, take in a short film at the outdoor pop-up cinema, catch a spontaneous tango on the street, listen to the author of 'Alone It Stands', tune your ears to the cello, take a theatre workshop at Faber studio, and much, much more.

The programme of installations, workshops and performances are the collaborative result of a combination of over 50 participants, who have come together to share the possibilities of transforming the street into a "pulsating creative environment".

"The 'CATDIG' street festival is aimed at showcasing "how wonderfully unique and special" Limerick city centre is, and a huge variety of free events - music, performance, theatre - art installations and workshops will take place. The project is part of the Ev+A exhibition.

The festival is the end result of this three month "cultural dig", and the documentation of the street, from the number of plugs in each business, to the staging of street theatre outside.

Marilyn explains: "We had several meetings and introduced ourselves and what our idea was, which was to basically to turn Catherine Street into one

huge venue for the weekend".

"We are really using the resources that are already on the street and we are trying to accommodate and bring people together who would never actually come together," she adds.

The result is staggering: practitioners from the likes of Alone It Stands author John Breen will attend, as will musicians like Vertigo Smyth and Size2Shoes, Teaspach and Impact theatre companies, astronomers, puppeteers, performance artists from Galway and Dublin and representatives of the businesses themselves, who will host discussions and events in their own premises.

"We said we wanted to use their premises as a venue, and for them to be the host, and once everybody got comfortable with the process, the boundaries weren't confined - they were actually opened," says Paul.

"An alleyway became a venue for a cinema and so on, or an archway for a dance stage, and as a result people can perform in places that are not normally performed in."

Marilyn adds: "It is about setting up a sustainable relationship where people work in the city, and the city becomes the focus. We want to get people onto the street who normally wouldn't come, bring people and create that energy".

The Catherine Street Cultural Dig takes place this Friday, May 7 to Sunday May 9. The full programme can be downloaded online, see www.spiritstorelimerick.weebly.com

## Shakespearean tour de force with actor Logan at Friars Gate

THIS Saturday, May 8, Olivier award nominee and Royal Shakespeare Company actor Gerard Logan will present his five star solo performance of Shakespeare's great narrative poem, The Rape of Lucrece, about the terrible crime of rape and its dreadful consequences.

This is theatre at its purest: a single actor, an empty stage - and the torment of rapist and victim brought searingly to life.

As ever, though, Shakespeare goes beyond the obvious, following the ramifications of the crime wherever they take him. The Rape of Lucrece is a show that comes with the highest pedigree.

Gerard Logan has played leading roles with both the National Theatre and the RSC, and has been nominated for an Olivier Award.

Director Gareth Armstrong has created many successful solo shows, including his own award-winning Shylock.

The evening represents a genuine tour de force by Logan, renowned as a consummate story-teller who combines compelling



Gerard Logan brings Shakespeare's work 'searingly to life'

intensity with unremitting clarity of delivery.

Running time - 1 hour.  
Tickets €12/€10

**Walk in the wood sculpture exhibition**

Everyone is welcome to visit Friars' Gate Theatre, Kilmallock on Friday 7th May between 7 - 9pm to celebrate the opening of Walk in the Wood an exhibition of new wood sculpture by Conleth Cent.

Concerned mainly with personal expression through the use of figurative elements, his is an individualistic approach communicating something of the character of the particular piece of wood and the artist's interaction with it.

**Women's Voices... women's stories**

On Thursday, May 13, Friars' Gate will host Women's Voices... Women's Stories - a programme of poetry, song, story and drama featuring internationally renowned spiritual singer Noirin Ni Riain, acclaimed actor Cora Fenton and widely published poet Eileen Sheehan.

Weaving magically and effortlessly between poetry, song, story and drama, Women's Voices... Women's Stories... promises to uplift, entertain and inspire everyone, male and female, young and old, alike. Tickets €12/€10. Bookings 063-98727 / www.friarsgate.ie

## Get into the swing of it at LIT

SET in a smoky New York bar, Strictly Swing is an upbeat celebration of the best-loved music of legendary artists Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole and Bing Crosby and it's coming to LIT Millennium Theatre this Sunday May 9.

Led by a superb cast of West End Singers, supported by the sassy and sexy all girl band, glamorous musical sextet the 'Jazz Belles', this show has

something for everyone. 'Strictly Swing' combines the winning formula of style and humour, with the tunes that made this era so memorable.

Songs like 'Fly Me to the Moon', 'Jeepers Creepers', 'Chicago' and 'My Way' along with duets like 'Me and My Shadow' and 'Road to Morocco'. They will be many more swing classics that will transport audiences back to the Golden

Era of Swinging nights and Glamorous Parties.

'Strictly Swing' is an evening of sophistication, nostalgia and witty anecdotes with swing legends Frank, Nat and Bing. A truly 'unforgettable', entertaining show with a rip-roaring finale.

Tickets: 22 / Conc. 20  
(Booking fee applies)  
Booking: 061 322322 / www.litmt.ie