

MESCALL & THE MUSIC

**Don Mescall
talks to
The Munster
Express**

DERMOT KEYES REPORTS

DON Mescall was in fine form when The Munster Express telephoned him in Nashville prior to the Festive break.

The Limerick native, who has been a regular on the Waterford circuit for many years, is delighted with the success of his new album, 'Lighthouse Keeper', which saw him team up with several of his musical inspirations (Paul Brady, Sharon Corr, Frances Black and many more) to produce a record that's gone down a treat with fans.

"It's not that I didn't expect it to do well because I really think it's a great record and that's being said as objectively as I can be, it's almost as if I was making a record for someone else," he said. "It's a strong record but I suppose the only surprise I have about it all is that it's my first album since 2006!"

Why so? "Well, I guess I shied back a bit from that whole thing about being an artist, I was more comfortable being the song writer, the guy behind the scenes and all that. But as the years passed by, I began to find myself missing the performance side of things, I love to sing and as a songwriter, it's almost like coming full circle: you write or co-write the song but if you don't get to perform it front of people, you're missing out on that connection with the audience. I love lyrics and I just love songs - I'm pretty useless at everything else! - I love the connection that you

can make with people through music, it's an amazing thing. You can stand in front of an audience and no-one sitting in front of you might know anything personally about you because it's not about that, and you can sing a song and touch someone's emotion, even sometimes their heart and on some occasion, someone might come up to you at the end of a gig and say that they were really moved by that song, that that was exactly how they felt. And that really is an amazing thing. I can't think of any other thing in life where you can do that as such. So I feel very blessed to have that in my life, and it's something I probably wasn't conscious of when I was younger, when you're that bit more complacent about things, whereas now I do view it as a blessing to be able to sing and writing songs. I just love it."

When out on a mini-tour back home in 2017, some newly



Don Mescall is well and truly living the dream. Inset: Don is pictured with Geri Halliwell.

penned songs were well received by audiences.

Don explained: "People seemed to relate and respond so much to the lyrics and the melodies of the songs, and would continually ask (my daughter) Eve after every show 'why can't we buy this album?' And that's really where it began, So in October of 2017 we started working on 'Lighthouse Keeper'. I worked on a bunch of songs that I had co-written with some of my favourite co-writers/friends, and started weaving the album together with my co-conspirator Michele Busdraghi, at my own recording studio the 'Pepperpot Studio' by the River Thames in London.

"I then decided to ask artists and friends that I had admired and had worked with over the years - some of which I had written for or with - to sing with me on some of the tracks. I picked songs that I felt each particular artist might relate to...and even though it's been a 12-year wait to follow up 'Innocent Run', I feel it's been worth the wait!"

(See Encore 2 for more)



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(FROM *Encore 1*): “They all brought something,” said Don of his fellow collaborators. “This album isn’t the old fashioned duet-type record where someone takes a verse, it really isn’t about that. It’s more from a support point of view in terms of what each of them can bring to it and I’m really proud of it, I have to say.”

Don is well-known to Waterford audiences (“It’s like a second home to me”) and he recently worked with the fantastic Mount Sion Secondary School Choir, which we previously reported on.

“They’re something else, aren’t they?” said Don. “They opened for me at St Patrick’s Gateway and they just blew me away with their energy. Everything about them impressed me: their voices, their stories and right from the get-go, I just thought this was meant to be. They just

light up every room they come into. Colette Kearney and the teachers there are just amazing people and it’s hard not to be inspired when you’re around people like that. These kids are just incredible - so following up from that first gig, I invited the choir to London and got them into the Metropolitan Studio. I guess it was my own way of giving something back, to help somebody else’s dream come true. They’re on their own journey and I am absolutely delighted to be a part of it.”

On November 8th, the choir re-teamed with Don to perform at a concert at the University of Limerick (UL), where the guest of honour was adopted Limerick woman and Mooncoin native Vicky Phelan.

“Again, talk about an inspirational person,” he stated. “It was a genuine honour to meet her and to invite her onto the stage that night at the University Concert Hall, it was just an amazing night. And to have

Don Mescall has a great affinity for Waterford audiences.

the Mount Sion Choir as part of that was just the cherry on top. The concert is going to be an annual event and I have no doubt that the Mount Sion Choir will be part of the night again next year.”

He continued “Waterford? Well, it’s one of my favourite places back home; I’ve spent so much time there. Tramore was one of the first places I came back to, to play after I’d left Ireland to become a singer-songwriter so I have this deep connection with Tramore and Waterford, which is something I treasure.”

This City of Music will, no doubt, warmly welcome Don back when he returns to play here - and he’s promised we won’t have to wait 12 years for his third album!

With thanks to Siobhan Breathnach. For more, visit www.donmescall.com.

“Trees” exhibition on Staff Art Wall at UHW

AN exhibition of paintings by Melanie Fox remains on view at University Hospital Waterford (UHW) as part of the Staff Art Wall initiative, managed by Waterford Healing Art Trust. Entitled “Trees”, the exhibition is a beautiful series of oil paintings on canvas and medite. The exhibition continues until Friday, January 11th. The Staff Art Wall is an initiative of Waterford Healing Arts Trust which aims to celebrate the creativity of HSE staff by providing an opportunity to display their work at the hospital.

Originally from County Meath, Melanie moved to Waterford in 1984 and started work at University Hospital Waterford in 1990.

She spent two years working in Theatre, ten years in Coronary Care and four years in the Rheumatology Department.

Melanie is now a Clinical Nurse Specialist in Osteoporosis and has been managing the Fracture Liaison Service since 2006. Her favourite artist is Salvador Dali. Melanie says “I enjoy being creative, including gardening, up-cycling and painting. I chose to paint trees



because they stand all over our country, sometimes for a long time and often we don’t notice them or their beauty.”

Further details are available from www.waterfordhealingarts.com

IRISH PREMIERE OF ‘LOVESONG’ AT GARTER LANE



The Lovesong cast of Jenny Fennessy, Dylan Kennedy, Sean Ahern and Mary Flavin Colbert.

RED ‘n Blue Theatre is proud to present the Irish Premiere of ‘Lovesong’, a story of one couple, told from two different points in their lives – as young lovers in their late 20s and as worldly companions looking back on their relationship.

The play will run at Garter Lane Arts Centre from Thursday, January 17th to Saturday, January 19th (8pm; Tickets: €16/Concession: €14).

Their past and present selves collide in this beautiful tale of togetherness. All relationships have their ups and downs; the optimism of youth becomes the wisdom of experience. Love, according to its writer, Abi Morgan (The Iron Lady) is “a leap of faith”.

This premiere production will be performed by Jenny Fennessy, Dylan Kennedy, Sean Ahern and Mary Flavin Colbert.

Dylan and Jenny hail from Cork and Waterford respectively. Early in their careers they left Ireland to pursue acting work in London.

Fifteen years later, Dylan and Jenny have worked with some of the best theatre directors including Tony award winner John Tiffany, Oliver award winners Katie Mitchell, Lyndsey Turner, Sir Richard Eyre and current artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Greg Doran. Dylan and Jenny have now returned to Ireland, combined their experience, passion and knowledge and formed Red ‘n Blue theatre company. This will be their debut production.

As young actors they were given excellent opportunities from local drama groups before working in London. Jenny played Bridget in Jim Nolan’s ‘Moonshine’ with Brideview Drama group which won the All Ireland Drama festival final. This success led to her first professional acting job in Jim Nolan’s The Salvage Shop in Garter Lane.

Dylan played Joseph in The Everyman Palace, Cork in Joseph and his Techni-Coloured Dream Coat and Rolf in The Sound of Music at The Cork Opera House.

Giving professional acting opportunities to amateur actors is something that Blue ‘n Red

Theatre Company feel very passionate about.

In ‘Lovesong’, Sean Ahern and Mary Flavin-Colbert will be making their professional debuts.

Sean Ahern won best supporting actor in the RTE All Ireland final with Brideview drama for his portrayal of Mick Tracey in The Stolen Child. In fact he is no stranger to All Ireland finals having won the One Act Drama League of Ireland final last year playing Nashie in The Quiet Land and finishing second this year with Where is this Malabar?

Both shows were produced by The Palace Players who have been in All Ireland Finals on three other occasions with Sean in The Lonesome West, The Wake and The Gigli Concert.

Sean’s credits include Bull McCabe in The Field, Jap Kavanagh in The Kings of the Kilburn High Road, Byrne in Big Maggie, Pato in The Beauty Queen of Leenane and John Bosco in The Chastitute. .

Mary Flavin Colbert is also an award winning actress having picked up the best actress in a supporting role award in 2015 playing Missus in Conversations on a Homecoming. This production by The Palace Players went on to win the RTE All Ireland Drama Festival final. Mary has also just been nominated for the best performance award for Hannie in Where is this Malabar?

She is well known at The All Ireland Drama Festival finals having been in The Wake and The Crucible with The Palace Players and in Out of Order and Albertine in Five Times with Ballyduff Drama Group. Other credits include the title role in Moll, Maggie in Dancing at Lughnasa, Mag in The Beauty Queen of Lennane and Madge in Philadelphia Here I Come.

This production is supported by Waterford City & County Council and Creative Waterford.

For bookings, call Garter Lane Arts Centre on 051-855038 or email ticket@garterlane.ie