



REVIEWS

Other Voices St James's Church, Dingle

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Eight years in and the reinvented *Other Voices* still has the capacity to surprise and excite in equal measure. The seemingly never-ending supply of fresh and innovative acts (mixed with a few tried and tested names) means that, in the past four years anyway, this event rarely, if ever, trips itself up.

The opening night last Saturday saw former Turn singer Ollie Cole put in a sometimes nervous performance, previewing songs from his forthcoming debut solo album, *We Albatris*.

Headliners Snow Patrol then ripped through an unusually lengthy 15-or-so-track set that referenced their time spent in Dingle forging songs that would make them world contenders.

Sunday night's list of acts included Bell X1, Villagers, The Antlers and The Magic Numbers, and my good God, but didn't The Antlers and Villagers rip through two of the best short sets this writer has seen in an age. Unusually, Bell X1 appeared

hesitant and reticent, what with sound and technical issues inhibiting their normally smooth style, while The Magic Numbers proved they have more bullets in their arsenal than one had thought possible (new songs *Restless River* and *The Pulse* rattle with the Kerry ring of confidence).

The Antlers, though, locked horns (ahem) with serious topics and some amazing, undulating quiet/loud rhythms that had the audience in raptures. Villagers (featuring Conor O'Brien on vocals), meanwhile, proved that 2010 could well be a bumper year for the band. Here were superbly crafted songs of introspection, intensity and intelligence.

Monday night brought us further delights in the shape of Imelda May, Megafaun, The Lost Brothers and The Brothers Movement. May swiftly ripped through rockabilly and torch/soul, The Lost Brothers deftly balanced harmonies and melodies, while The Brothers Movement cranked it up with fine guitar work and psych-pop tunes.

Megafaun were something else, altogether though: nominally a freak-folk trio from North Carolina, the music is Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young raised on a diet of free jazz. It sounds too tricky for words, but on stage the bearded men rule with a cerebral amalgam of humour (never a bad thing when free jazz is involved), technical know-how and taut melody lines. An add-on of uilleann piper Eoin Duignan towards the close of the gig brought together the worlds of trad and Stockhausen, and, believe me, Dingle was a better place for it.

Tuesday night's line-up of Fionn Regan, Jesca Hoop, The Temper Trap and Brett Anderson fused purity with strangeness, quirk and charm. Anderson felled any hint of indifference or cynicism towards him with a suite of subtle, almost glacial piano-led songs that marked him out not only as a survivor of darker times but also as a singer and performer of serious intent. Jesca Hoop, meanwhile, came across as perhaps too deliberately a kooky

Californian gal, although her songs of deft, askew alt.folk balanced the overall effect. There were no such doubts about The Temper Trap, who have the word "success" imprinted from tip to toe but whose occasional deference to U2 could either make it or break it for them. As for Fionn Regan – well, Fionn is clearly suffering from the

Subterranean Homesick Dingle Blues, such is the music's overt reference to early electric Bob Dylan.

The event concluded on Wednesday night with a surge of concentrated excellence from Adrian Crowley, beautifully crafted lo-fi pop from The XX, surprisingly supple, engaging acoustic hip-hop from Speech Debelle, and – winning this writer's award for best gig of the year – tear-shedding, blissed-out retro-pop from Richard Hawley. *Other Voices 8* will be broadcast on RTÉ television early next year