



# OTHERWORLDLY

From Jarvis Cocker to The National, many top stars are realising the unique magic of Dingle's special music festival Other Voices, says **Eamon Sweeney** — and it's getting better every year

**T**he sight of Jarvis Cocker ambling around Dingle in December is just a small measure of how far a little music series from Ireland has come in the space of nine short years. As Pulp fans all over the world babble on excitedly about the Sheffield band's reunion, Cocker is completely immersing himself in the Dingle experience.

Those striking spectacles are later spotted taking a pilgrimage to see Fungi and enjoying a hot toddy in Dick Maes.

Cocker is here by invitation of fellow Sheffield man and long-term friend and collaborator Richard Hawley, who's curating an episode of Ireland's longest-running music series. "I think the word curator is a bit grandiose for me," Hawley laughs over a coffee in a cosy lounge in Benner's Hotel.

"When I first came here, I completely fell in love with Dingle. This is an amazing way to finish a year and it keeps you going when you're in Middlesbrough in the rain. Not that there's anything wrong with Middlesbrough."

Hawley is evangelical about **Other Voices** to his fellow musicians, lauding it as an amazing concept that really needs to be experienced first hand to be fully believed and savoured.

The Gods must have been smiling on **Other Voices** too, as the Dingle Peninsula is spared the worst ravages of the cold snap. The sun shines, you can go for a stroll without risking life and limb and the infectious feel-good factor of the recording of the ninth series is alive and well and truly kicking.

St James Church on Dingle Main Street only holds a paltry 80 people, but for the first time a live feed on a big screen is being relayed to pubs around the town and quality of sound and vision is first class. It certainly makes for a more special occasion for anyone without one of the most coveted tickets in the country,

as they can enjoy every second of the proceedings sipping the creamiest pints in Ireland.

Even though **Other Voices** 2010 is graced with a bona fide celebrity in the skinny shape of Jarvis Cocker, the event prides itself on giving new talent a platform.

This year's first act Anna Calvi releases her debut album on Domino in January. On the strength of her gutsy and confident performance of noise and skewered melodies, she's certainly genuinely one to watch in 2011 before those annual tipping lists bombard us.

"When I play live I'm a different person," she explains. "I feel powerful and fearless. All the things I wish I felt in everyday life."

Nick Cave and Brian Eno are already fans and expect her to soon gain considerably more.

Sadly, the wonderful Laura Marling has

had to pull her appearance at literally the very last minute on doctor's orders, despite spending 20 hours getting to Dingle. However, the show must go on and an evening with Richard Hawley and friends more than makes up for it. He warms up nicely, playing an epic extended cover version of *I'm Waiting for The Man* by the Velvet Underground that's at least three times longer than the original.

Hawley also chips in *Devil in Disguise* with Elvis, an artist he holds very dear, as he'd had the privilege of writing for Lisa Marie Presley. His Northern wit is as sharp as ever. "Seeing as it's coming up to Christmas, I'm going to do one to get you in the festive mood," he says. "This song is called *Girl on Death Row*."

Hawley invites Lisa Hannigan to the stage, who he describes as possessing a voice that's "a gift to the world". This unlikely pairing duet on a gorgeous rendition of *Hushabye Mountain* from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, which sets the tone for an evening of brilliant, bizarre and totally unexpected performances.

Hannigan does a beautiful solo version of *Moon River* backed by Richard's first-rate band.

Enter the one and only Jarvis Cocker. The Pulp leader tells us about his little adventure to see Fungi the dolphin and prefaces *I'm a Stranger Here* by Lambchop

## MAGIC MOMENTS

### ■ RUFUS WAINWRIGHT HALLELUJAH

Unbelievably, this has received more than 8.3 million hits on YouTube, a viral loop that the show's creators never could have envisaged. A cover of Cohen's classic that's as good as Jeff Buckley's and a perfect way to banish the memories of those wretched recent renditions.

### ■ AMY WINEHOUSE REHAB

"She arrived on her own, no entourage, security or fuss," Aoife Woodcock reveals. "She was sensational and her voice was amazing in the church." Before Amy

Winehouse's life sadly turned into a tawdry circus, she wowed St James with what is still a much-talked about and cherished performance.

### ■ THE NATIONAL MR NOVEMBER

The song that inspires communal euphoria at the end of every recent National show will provide a priceless small-screen moment in 2011. Matt Berninger softly intoning, "I used to be carried in the arms of cheerleaders", before exploding into a raucous, euphoric chorus will forever linger in the memory.





DINGLE BELL ROCK: From left, Jarvis Cocker, Ellie Goulding, The National and Richard Hawley

## MARTHA WAINWRIGHT RAN OUT INTO THE STREET AND SHOUTED 'HEY DINGLE!' AT ME

by saying he hopes not to become a stranger to Dingle.

He produces a tattered guitar, which he claims is worth 40p, but was booked its own seat on the flight over and issued with a boarding pass under the name, "Mr A Guitar Cocker".

"Performers have egos, but when you're playing from the front of a church your ego really takes you that extra mile," chuckles Cocker. "Do you know our band used to be called Pulpit? We just dropped the it." If the music didn't work out Cocker and Hawley could make pretty decent fist at stand-up comedy.

Speaking of Pulp, *Something Changed* from *Different Class* whets the appetite for next year's festival headlining extravaganza in front of crowds infinitely bigger than the turnout at a small Irish wedding.

It's a magical mystery tour with Jarvis and Richard at the helm taking in Lee Hazelwood, the Everly Brothers and more Elvis with *One Night*. "I share three letters of my name with the King of rock'n'roll" Cocker says with a comic thrust of the hips and theatrical wave of his finger.

Lisa Hannigan returns to the stage for a festive rendition of *Silent Night* of all things, a song that you'd never imagine Jarvis Cocker singing in a billion years. Out of all the cult heroes of the heyday of Britpop, it's impossible to picture Liam Gallagher or Damon Albarn involved in such a delightfully quirky performance.

If Saturday night is the unexpected party full of surprise, intrigue, laughs and musical mischief, Sunday night is instantly hailed as one of the finest and most moving

performances in **Other Voices** history. Series producer Philip King introduces The National as the band of the year and anyone who attended last week's Olympia run, or has fallen head over heels for leading album of the year contender *High Violet*, certainly will agree.

Music producer and booker Aoife Woodlock has spent the past six years trying to secure The National for **Other Voices** and that persistence pays off spectacularly with a magical and mesmerising performance. The opening track of *High Violet*, *Terrible Love*, is quite possibly 10 times better live and it's heartwarming that it's been recorded for posterity.

Matt Berninger's warm and subtly soulful baritone on *Bloodbuzz Ohio* sends shivers down 80 spines and the stun gun continues with *Fake Empire, England* and an awesome *Mr November*.

People are left speechless, genuinely moved and thrilled with the sheer privilege of bearing witness to such an intimate, once-in-a-lifetime live experience. John Smith, **Cathy Davey** and Ellie Goulding might have a tough act to follow, but they succeed in being themselves. **Headline acts hold no currency at Other Voices**

For Woodlock, **Other Voices** is a year-round endeavor, trawling the multitudes of bands at South By Southwest in Texas and seeking out new talent continually.

"Martha Wainwright ran out into the street in Houston and shouted 'Hey Dingle!' at me because she couldn't remember my name," she laughs.

"I know people must get bored to tears being told how great **Other Voices** is, but it's only when they get here that they get it. Richard Hawley has been a great ambassador and champion. He was on the phone to Paul Weller after the gig last night telling him he's got to come next year."

"I tend to write about the disappearance of culture and Dingle has certainly inspired me," Hawley maintains. "The thing that's forgotten is that when it's gone, it's gone forever. I don't think people realise how lucky they are that you've still got a place as magical and real as Dingle."

After nine instalments that have gathered more momentum with each passing year, who knows what treats are in store for series 10 in 2011.

In the meantime, there'll be plenty of priceless footage for your viewing pleasure in the New Year. In uncertain times, **Other Voices** is a true national treasure.