



**Y**OU WOULD THINK by this stage that **Other Voices** would have run out of steam. Now in its ninth year, the music series, overseen by Philip King's South Wind Blows film-production company, has played host to the rash of Irish singer-songwriters who began their rise to prominence in the late 1990s/early 2000s and who have since either flourished or foundered.

Around its third year **Other Voices** seemed as if it was in danger of painting itself into a corner, but something happened: it got hipper, weirder and cooler, shedding along the way the perception that it was celebrating a scene that all too easily celebrated itself.

This is a show that people want to take part in, a show that bands will go to extraordinary lengths to get to. Why else would acts of the calibre of The National bother? Why else would the likes of Laura Marling (whose performance was derailed by a viral infection) or Jarvis Cocker (who has no album to promote) bother?

**Friday**

You could argue that Marling and The National are in Ireland anyway, and sure it's only a schlep down to Dingle from Dublin, but that doesn't hold water (or, indeed, ice) when they brave treacherous roads to play in front of the cameras for about 30 minutes.

In Cocker's case you could assume he's here only because he's best friends with Richard Hawley, who's also performing. But, as Hawley says between rehearsals, a fag and a cup of tea, "I wouldn't have asked Jarvis to do something I feel he wouldn't have enjoyed. I was positive and adamant that if I got him to Dingle he'd know what it was all about. He'd get out of it exactly what I get out of it."

Hawley is now regarded as an official member of the **Other Voices** community. Last week's visit and performance was his third, and if he's in Dingle next year don't be too surprised.

He arrived here with his band of musician spiv lookalikes, accompanied by Cocker and his dolphin-loving partner. After a visit to Hawley's favourite Dingle pub, Foxy Johns ("I've finally found a place where I can get light-bulbs, rat poison and a pint of Guinness"), on Friday, a boat trip to see Fungie the dolphin takes up much of Saturday morning, leaving time in the afternoon to prepare for their one-off performance.

Speaking of which...

**Saturday**

It has come to the attention of Jarvis Cocker that his first name shares its final three letters with the King of Rock'n'Roll's. He divulges this keen-eyed observation to the packed pews of St James's Church, prior to launching into renditions of *Memphis Tennessee* and *One Night with You*.

The former is the kind of performance that comes with being clued into Chas 'n' Dave and The Clash; the latter highlights Cocker's obvious debt to the cult English performer John Otway, the man who made a career of being a self-confessed failure. *One Night with You* is all angular hip thrusts and comic timing performed by a man in NHS glasses and thrift-shop clothes, and, as the barman in Foxy Johns might say, you don't see too many of those around Dingle.

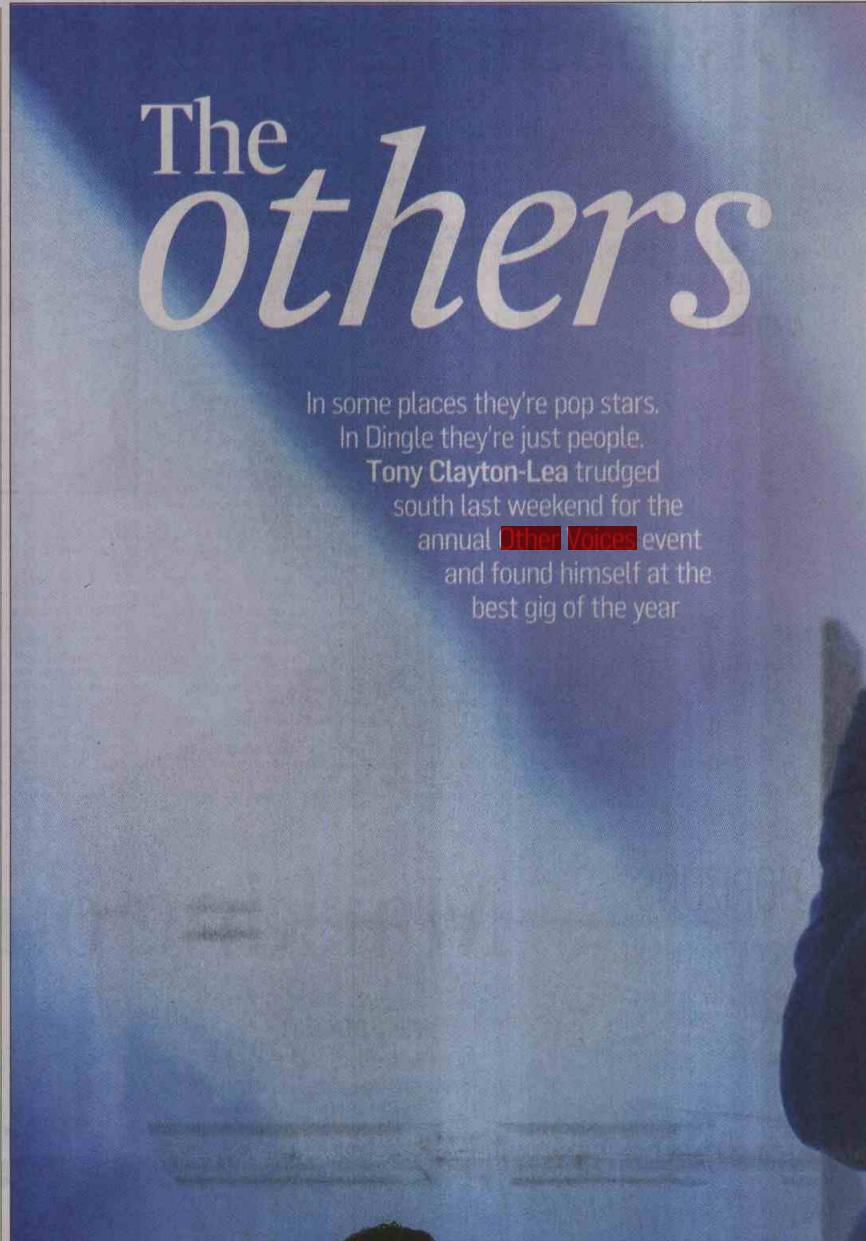
When we aren't laughing with Cocker (he's far too self-aware not to be in on the joke) we are quietly stunned by Hawley's dexterity as a guitarist and by guest vocalist Lisa Hannigan's penchant for 1950s-Ireland peasant chic.

It is Hannigan's voice that takes us, as always, by surprise: her version of *Moon River* is spine-tingling, while her harmonies on the encore of *Silent Night* lend the evening the kind of salient Christmas touch that rarely gets properly delivered.

The gig highlights something else about music that is often overlooked: it is fun.

In stark contrast, the support act, Anna Calvi, is wound up to ninety and dressed to the nines. The London/Tuscany singer delivers bursts of intense, serious music that prick the skin, but the Cocker & Hawley Show fuses great, often unheralded music (from Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup to Lee Hazlewood, from the Everly Brothers to Sanford Clark) with physical comedy and killer one-liners. Result? The best gig of the year, hands down.

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# The Others

In some places they're pop stars.  
 In Dingle they're just people.  
 Tony Clayton-Lea trudged south last weekend for the annual **Other Voices** event and found himself at the best gig of the year

The motherlode: Matt Bernington, lead singer of The National, at St James's Church last Sunday (above), where Jarvis Cocker (right) and Anna Calvi (far right) also played



**Sunday**

Oh, look, there's one of the coolest bands of the year trying on thick knitted jumpers and cardigans. The National have landed in Dingle, and they're mooching in Garvey's shop, where they look this way and that in the full-length mirrors, checking out the woolies.

They will throw different kinds of shapes later on in St James's Church, when, with all the fury of the Jesse James gang on the run from a cartel of sheriffs, they tear down the walls.

The band, from Cincinnati via Brooklyn, have been around for more than 10 years, but it's only in the past five that they've been making any kind of commercial inroads. They're in Dingle because they have been chased for several years by **Other Voices** music producer and booker, Aoife Woodlock, whose antennae for ferreting out next big things are highly attuned.

As well as stalking certain acts, Woodlock starts her **Other Voices** campaign each year in Austin, Texas, at the South by Southwest event, from where she sifts through potential



international bands. Aside from this, **Other Voices** thrives on word of mouth for procurement: Elbow's Guy Garvey told Richard Hawley he had to be at Dingle; Hawley told Jarvis Cocker he had to do it, as well as putting the word out to Paul Weller and Noel Gallagher (each of whom have yet to make an appearance).

At St James's Church that night The National don't just strike the motherlode, they rent it asunder; it's rare to see such a wound-up frontman in Matt Berninger, who wouldn't seem out of place as a straitjacketed extra in *Shutter Island*.

All that followed is an anti-climax: the UK singer-songwriter John Smith channels the tone and demeanor of classic UK folkies such as John Renbourn and Bert Jansch; **Cathy Davey** allows nervousness to get the better of her; and the UK darling Ellie Goulding delivers a sweet, short set full of confidence and vigour, backed by a female string quartet who are most definitely not dressed for the weather.

### Monday

One of the most interesting elements of **Other Voices** is the way in which the musicians and singers are allowed to be humans. Some PR people, music management and record-company personnel will do anything to protect their clients from engaging in real life; there's



none of that nonsense in Dingle.

Jarvis Cocker and Richard Hawley chatting around a blazing fire in McCarthy's, followed by a spot of oddness in Dick Macks pub. The National in the sitting room of Dolores Begley in the afternoon and in Foxy Johns for a pint after the show. **Cathy Davey** blending in for an acoustic set in the Green Lane Gallery. Every-

thing Everything in the Round House. Here, musicians are taken out of their comfort zones, removed from the often ridiculously protection of their minders and placed in different surroundings.

In other words they are treated as real people not cossetted pop stars.

Monday evening and St James's Church delivers two contrasting performances, each from an Irish act. The singer-songwriter James Vincent McMorrow is slow and measured with a series of songs that channel his Donny Hathaway fixations into pastoral tunes.

The Derry/Antrim band And So I Watch You From Afar, meanwhile, trick around with a terrific sound that positions delicate blues/jazz guitar lines alongside monolithic riffs that have quite a few people using ear-plugs (kindly provided).

By midweek **Other Voices** has packed up shop, and Dingle is ready to roll out the banners proclaiming "hibernation one again". Come next December it will see in its 10th outing. If all the stars align, or if even half of Aoife Woodlock's stalker strategies come to fruition, it will continue on its journey as a transcendent mix of trust, music, dedication, talent, technology, art, community and what Philip King describes as human investment capital.

**Other Voices** will be broadcast by RTÉ in the new year