



Gray area is a big break for talented Lisa

Ballyhaise songstress to support top Welsh singer on American tour

Sinead Hogan

BALLYHAISE songstress, Lisa O'Neill, has been chosen by David Gray as his support act and backing vocalist for his tour of the US and Canada starting in Boston on February 21. The talented Cavan singer songwriter who regularly plays at the Electric Picnic will spend over two weeks touring from the east to the west coast of America, travelling by bus with Gray and his six band members.

Excited, nervous and delighted, Lisa says it's "out of the movies stuff" but has her feet firmly on the ground and her head screwed on tight.

"I'm very aware that in the music business this is a break but, as yet, I don't know how it's going to turn out for me. I think it's definitely going to be positive but as for how big it's going to be I don't know," says the daughter of Bud and Carmel O'Neill, the former being a drummer on the local scene.

Lisa says she hasn't trav-

elled much and has no idea how people are going to react her in The States, so she's not getting carried away.

"This is huge luck. Big opportunities could come from it, but it might just rest after it. I really don't know what to expect. All in all it's just going to be a great experience for me."

A lot has been happening for Lisa recently, with her Electric Picnic performances, national tour with Mick Flannery and her debut CD garnering acclaim.

Lisa and her band also recorded for the RTÉ programme, Other Voices Songs From A Room, and it's to be aired on February 23. Lisa will be mid-tour with Gray, but at home we can tune in to hear her sing Summertime Blues, a taster of her next album.

The recognition from David Gray came about when Today FM DJ, Donal Dineen, a firm fan of Lisa's music, sent her CD



Ready to sail away... Lisa O'Neill.

to the Welsh singer famed for the hit, This Year's Love. Gray checked Lisa out on Youtube and requested a meeting.

"We arranged a meeting to have a chat and this is what came out of the chat: he asked me to go on tour with him and I said yes," says Lisa, who was first introduced to Gray's album, White Ladder, by a Cavan friend Shane O'Connor when she was about 17.

"I loved it. I knew that album inside out, but I think Sail Away is a favourite."

There are 13 stops for the tour, all in old theatres, each with a 2,000 - 4,000 capacity. Lisa has scheduled a homecoming gig in Gonzo theatre, Cavan on Saturday, March 26. After that, she plans to immerse herself in a studio and record her next album.

"Then when that comes out, off we go again," says the 28-year-old.

• Full interview with Lisa O'Neill in next week's Celt.