



Ryan Sheridan: Putting the pieces together

BY KEVIN MCGUIRE

RYAN SHERIDAN is a man with a very bright future ahead of him. In his mid teens he toured the US with *Riverdance* and subsequently settled in New York.

The County Monaghan-born singer/guitarist made his first tentative moves as a singer-songwriter by playing the pubs and nightclubs on the Lower East Side in Manhattan. He was heartened by the reaction to his freshly-composed material but felt he still had a lot of learn before he could make it on the highly competitive folk scene.

Aside from Ryan, there were a number of other Irish artists plying their trade on the East Coast music and arts scene at the time. Brendan O'Shea, Mark Dignam, Michael Brunnock and Mark Geary encouraged Ryan and showed the young songwriter the ropes.

Ryan was not even old enough to legally drink in a lot of the places he regularly played but he had a truly unique style and captured the attention of his contemporaries. O'Shea recently said of him: "When I first met Ryan and heard him play a few years ago in New York I noticed straight away that his strong voice, lyrical wit, and guitar playing was a must see."

Ryan was a regular at venues such as Sin É and Arlene's Grocery. Only a few short years previously the legendary American songsmith Jeff

Buckley had made music headlines at the very same venues before his premature death in a drowning accident.

"I was in America for about seven or eight years," Ryan says. "Altogether I was about three years living in New York. It was a bit of a culture shock for me initially and that's kind of why I started to play music, to make sense of it."

"I started to really get into the singer-songwriter stuff. Brendan O'Shea, who's originally from County Kerry, was a really good friend and a great support."

Ryan knew that in the Big Apple he had to get good quick or head home. He crossed the Atlantic Ocean in 2004 and settled in Glasgow. It was there that he formed a popular three piece rock band called Shiversaint and together they worked the Scottish circuit.

Ryan though had hopes of making it as a solo act. "I was hoping to break through with the band but in the back of my mind I knew I wanted to be a solo performer. I did a load of different jobs in between and then one day I decided to quit everything and go busking instead."

Ryan returned to Dublin and supported himself by busking on Grafton Street. The popular shopping street is famous for producing names such as Glen Hansard, Paddy Casey, and The Hothouse Flowers. It was not long until Sheridan's song writing

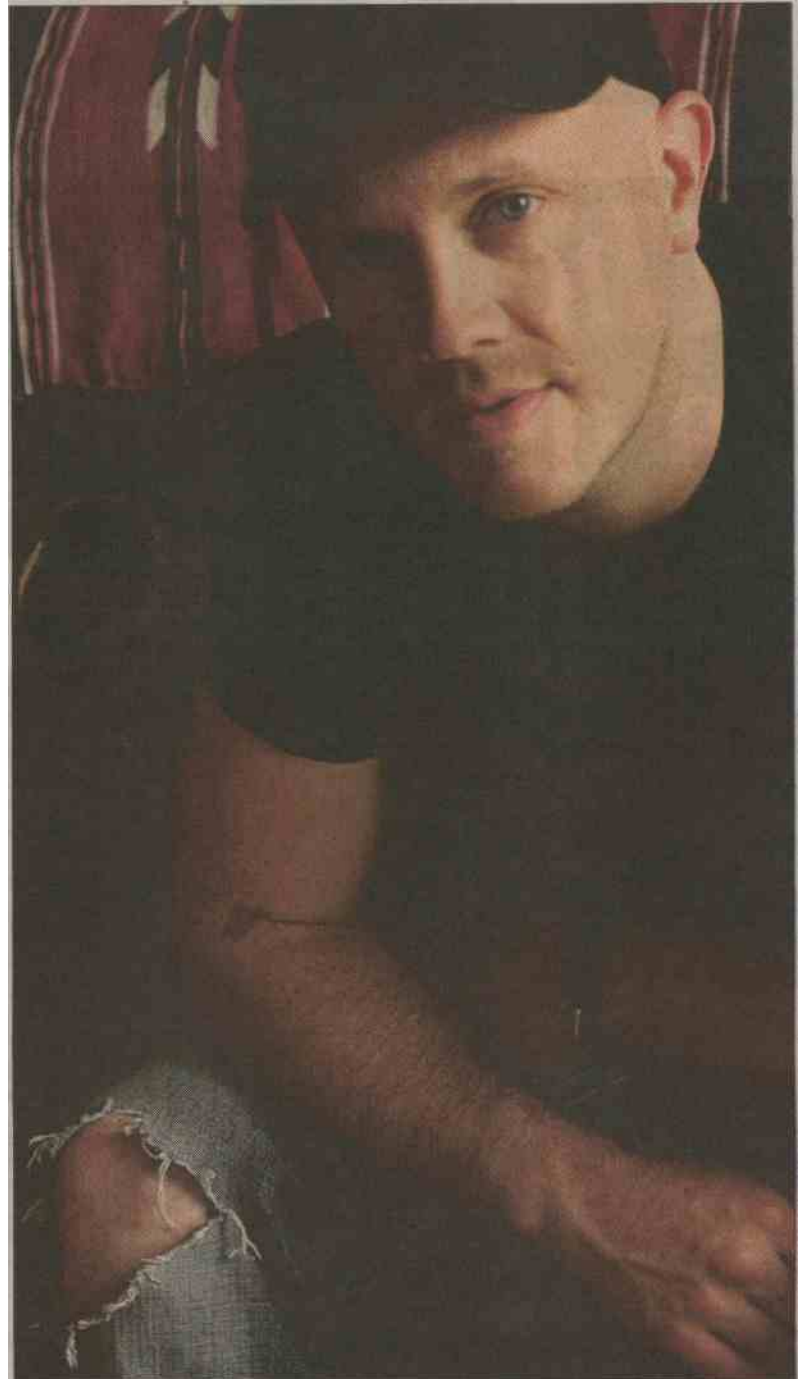
potential was discovered.

"There's a great freedom playing on the street," Ryan admits. "It's a great feeling when you realise that people are actually stopping what they're doing and listening to you play your songs. That's when I knew it was really working for me and it was great to get that instant feedback."

One day Brian Whitehead, the manager of the Olympia Theatre, was passing by and he was immediately captivated by Ryan's singing. He told *Hotpress*: "Over the years I've seen hundreds of people playing and I've never been inspired to get involved. But when I saw this guy, he blew me away. He was absolutely brilliant."

Whitehead nominated Sheridan for the SupaJam competition to win a place at Spain's Benicassim Music Festival. The Monaghan man beat more than 3,000 other acts to the slot. "It went to a panel of judges that included people like Vince Power," Ryan explains. "Anyway they chose me as the act to perform at the festival"

Since then the former busker has signed to Rubyworks Records and released his debut single 'Jigsaw' to huge acclaim. Sheridan performed at the Oxegen Festival and Electric Picnic last summer and will feature on the upcoming *Other Voices* music programme alongside Marina and The Diamonds.



Ryan Sheridan plays the Róisín Dubh on Saturday February 12 at 9pm. Tickets are available from the Róisín Dubh and www.roisindubh.net