



By **MARTIN BURNS**

THIS is a very exciting time for Irish music and this week we've decided to highlight three acts that we believe are destined for greatness in 2011.

First up is Sacred Animals who have enjoyed something of a meteoric rise in the year it has been in existence.

It's the moniker of Wexford singer-songwriter Darragh Nolan who used to be frontman with Dublin indie band Angel Pier.

But 12 months ago Darragh decided to strike out on his own and has gone from relative obscurity to being asked to record for RTE's show Other Voices.

He has also been picked – along with Dubliner duo Heathers and James Vincent McMorrow – to represent Irish music at the Eurosonic Festival in Holland next week. In March, he'll head off to fly the flag at Canadian Music Week in Toronto and the South By

Southwest Festival in Texas. Darragh said: "It's been a great year for me and things have happened very quickly. The band thing just wasn't working for me anymore.

"I suppose I realised that the music we were making wasn't the music I was into, which doesn't mean it was bad, it was just not my kind of stuff.

"I wanted to do my own thing. A lot of the music I was listening to in the last couple of years had a huge effect on me. Things like Animal Collective, The Antlers, Beach House and even Bon Iver.

"It was different from things I was listening to four years before, which was basically all about new wave guitars.

"I wanted to do something a little more ambient so I sat down in a room with some mics and started recording." He played some of the home demos to Irish label Delphi, who had taken an interest in



Angel Pier. They quickly snapped up Sacred Animals and organised his first three gigs in London, at Electric Picnic and Dublin's Hard Working Class Heroes festival.

Darragh said: "That was a big deal for me because when you are coming from the ground up it's great to get these kind of gigs.

Blogging

"It's difficult though because I really don't have enough songs at the minute to fill a full set so it's very encouraging, the reaction from people, considering this thing is still in the very early stages."

Sacred Animals released the debut EP Welcome Home in October and things started to take off when the internet blogging community got behind him.

Darragh said: "I started getting mentioned on blogs that I read. It's so encouraging when you start getting name-checked by people that you respect. Nial-

ler9's blog was the first, and then Harmless Noise started talking about me.

"Nialler9 was part of a thing called MAP, the Music Alliance Pact. There's 35 blogs from around the world, each one representing a different country. For the October MAP, Niall picked Sacred Animals.

"That propelled us up the charts of most blogged about artists on the internet. Things like that are very exciting for a geek like myself."

The next step for Sacred Animals will be another EP or a 7inch vinyl release.

Darragh said: "I'd like to do an album later in the year but I'm taking my time. There'll be another EP or maybe a single before then.

"I didn't want to go in to a recording studio because of the nature of the kind of music it is. I like to put it all together piece by piece, it's hard to do that in a studio."

● **SACRED** Animals play Whelan's in Dublin on Tuesday and appear on RTE's Other Voices next month.

