

WHAT LIAM DID NEXT...

Merriman to launch new album at Central Arts on December 27th



Liam Merriman, who will be joined by Ferrybank guitarist Bill Stuart at the launch of his new album at Central Arts on Thursday week.

Liam Merriman, joined by Ferrybank guitarist Bill Stuart (“I’m working on turning him into a folkie,” joked Liam) will launch his new album, ‘Acoustic Rivers’, at Central Arts on Thursday, December 27th. “For me it is the simplicity of the recording and its real-music-live-in-the-studio feel,” Liam opines in the album’s sleeve notes about the satisfaction he gleaned from assembling this 13-track record. “Playing and singing together at the same time, the inherent human approach, was the means we used rather than recording guitars and voices separately. We worked in real time with no click tracks. This allowed the natural ebb and flow of the songs to be experienced and captured. What you hear are full takes with no corrections or computer assisted fixes. The magic of played music happening in the moment and captured on record.”

With six original albums in his back catalogue, Liam’s previous work has been released by Polygram, RTE and the indie Three Rivers label, with other work being published in the United States by Cohesion Arts (as a contributing writer) and the Nashville-based 1861 Project. ‘Acoustic Rivers’, according to Liam, is a mix of tracks, “some recent, and others like longtime friends, that come from different eras of my songwriting life”.

He added: “In April 2017, I headed back to Nashville to record some acoustic tracks with my good friend Thomm Jutz (singer, songwriter and producer).

The idea was simply to do acoustic versions of a selection of my own songs working with two guitars, voice, and maybe a

sprinkle of harmony vocals. My original intention was to record a mix of tracks, maybe a half dozen or so, keep it nice and relaxed, and see what happens. Each morning I'd be in the TJ Tunes studios by 9.30am, anticipating how the day's efforts might unfold. Let me tell you that this is an exceptionally welcoming creative space and many major artistes and songwriters have been through its doors. I will name check John Prine, Nanci Griffith, Marty Stuart, Otis Gibbs, Maura O'Connell, not to mention a string of other revered names in folk, bluegrass, new grass, acoustic rock and beyond, as well as some legendary figures whose portraits you will see on the walls of Country Music's Hall of Fame in Nashville."

Liam's career has seen him to take to the road to support a range of stellar folk acts including the aforementioned Nanci Griffith, in addition to Christy Moore, Kiki Dee, Paul Brady, Clannad and Donovan. And over the years, he has added several strings to the bow, qualifying as a Music and Health Trainer under the European Commission's Leonardo da Vinci Lifelong Learning Programme. This was, as his bio puts it, "the culmination of Merriman's ambition to promote professional Music & Health standards and practice for hospital musicians in the Irish healthcare sector".

This saw Liam take on two European hospital projects via the auspices of the Paris-based Musique et Santé organisation in Paris, bringing live music onto a range of acute medical settings in participating hospitals across the continent. A lead hospital musician and mentor with the Waterford Healing Arts Trust (WHAT) where he has developed the 'Healing Sounds' programme, Liam has brought his music into a range of sensitive medical environments. He's currently working at the University Hospitals in Waterford, Cork and Limerick, in addition to St Vincent's Hospital, Crumlin, Temple Street, Tallaght and Beaumont paediatric hospitals, the LauraLynn Children's Hospital and several other healing environments.

It's both hugely rewarding and giving work, in an altogether different space from that traditionally associated with working musicians and it's a measure of the man that Liam set off on such a civic path through his music.

Assembling 'Acoustic Rivers' with Thomm Jutz in Nashville clearly invigorated Liam Merriman. "Thomm's studio is a special place where the needs of each song are at the heart of the process," he stated. "Every work is given artistic consideration and developed within a supportive and dynamic creative framework whether large or small-scale production is involved."

"We'd fine tune our Martin guitars first thing and start to play, sing, and work things out. When it felt right, I'd be dispatched into one of the studio's live rooms. Thomm would stay in the Control Room armed and ready with acoustic guitar and microphone primed." He continued: "'Ok, let's try one Liam' was the signal I'd hear in my headphones. After a count in, our fingers touch the strings and the music comes alive. The sound floats inside my head. I sing and play with mics on guitar and voice. All the time I am hearing myself as well as Thomm's accompaniment in my headphones. His guitar style is lifting the track, adding colour, texture, feeling and substance to the arrangement, all coming straight from our hearts, out through our fingers and voices and on to the disc."

The last notes, as Liam vividly describes it, ring out in "that moment of silence and expectation, and the feeling is good". Then it's time for a listen of what's been laid down. "We hear our two or three takes concentrating our ears on each note and phrase and we agree on which one will be retained as first choice. At this point we might even award ourselves a coffee break, or maybe not. If we're "in the groove" we know instinctively that its best keep going and get into the next song. And so, a few days drift by and before I know it we have a dozen tracks where I thought I might have had five or six. A thought occurs: "You know what I'd love to hear with this set-up?" What's that? "Could we give 'Wandering Road' the 'two guitar' treatment while we're at it?" Yea, sure, let's do it" comes Thomm's reply. We sit down, work it out and record it there and then." And by the end of that process, 'Acoustic Rivers' had come into being. "Thirteen tracks from me to you. May it take you someplace good." Play on, Liam.