

**STUNNING PICTURES FROM LADIES DAY AT THE KILLARNEY RACES**

# RSVP

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**SIOBHAN O'CONNOR**



**"I STILL GET DOUBTS BUT I'VE LEARNED TO WORK MYSELF THROUGH THEM"**

**CLODAGH McKENNA**



**CRAZY FOR CUPCAKES**

**EXCLUSIVE**

# ALAN CANTWELL

**INTRODUCING HIS BEAUTIFUL FAMILY IN THE MOST REVEALING INTERVIEW YET**

**JOHN SHEAHAN**



**CELEBRATING THE DUBLINERS, RONNIE DREW AND LUKE KELLY**

**MICHAEL JACKSON**

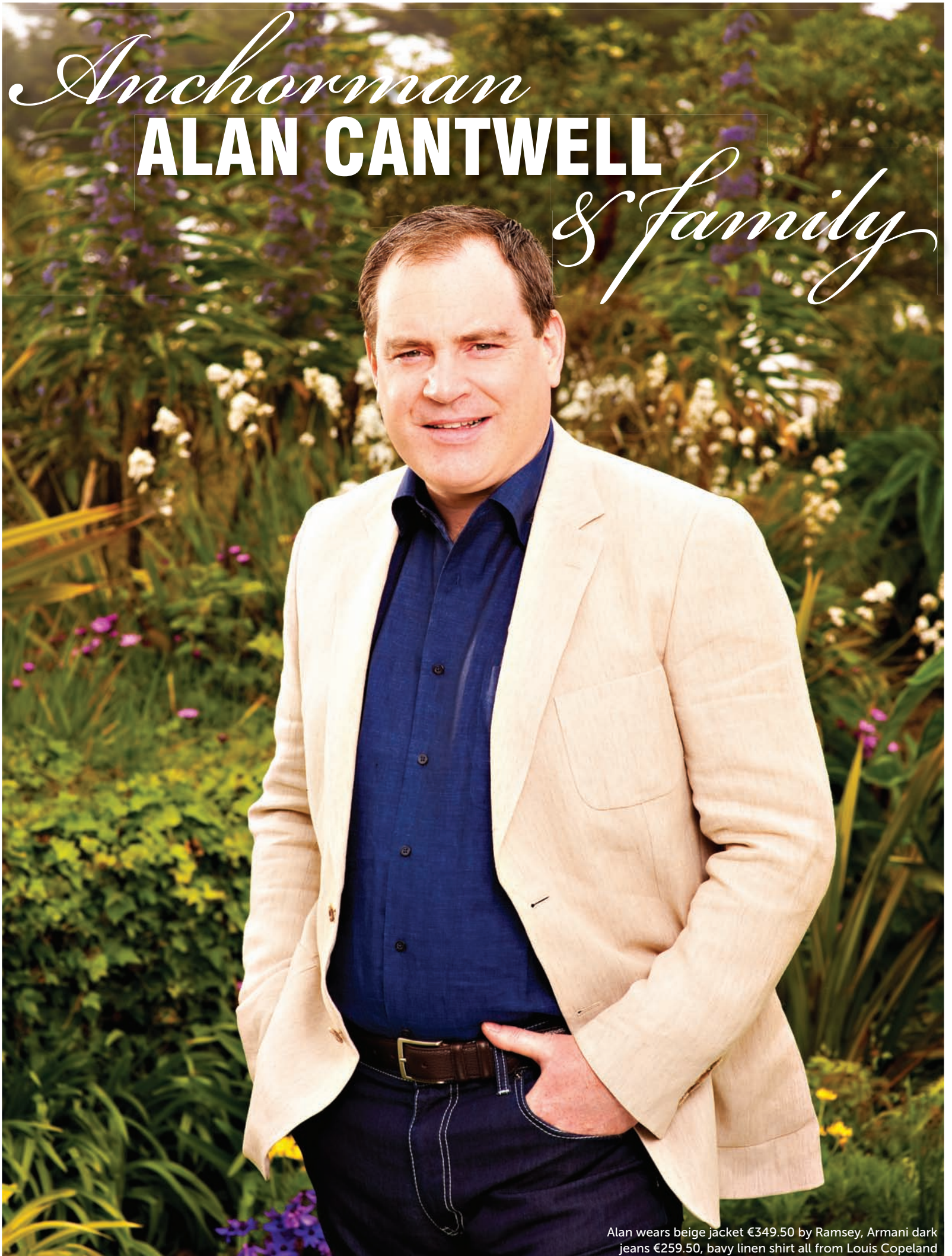


**SHOWBIZ EDITOR PAUL MARTIN REMEMBERS THE KING OF POP**

**JACKIE LAVIN - WORDS OF WISDOM FROM THE SET OF THE APPRENTICE, SOON TO HIT OUR SCREENS  
SENSATIONAL NEW LOOKS STRAIGHT FROM THE CATWALK FOR AUTUMN/WINTER 2009**



*Anchorman*  
**ALAN CANTWELL**  
*& Family*



Alan wears beige jacket €349.50 by Ramsey, Armani dark jeans €259.50, navy linen shirt all from Louis Copeland



**A**lan Cantwell is the face and voice of certainty in these uncertain times we live in. The TV3 News Anchor and co-presenter of the stations 'Midday' programme is someone we believe we can trust to guide us through the most important issues of the day. The native of Dublin was for some time News Editor at Independent Network News (I.N.N.) while before that he was head of News, Current Affairs and Programming at Clare FM. He has also worked with Dublin's 98FM on their late night talk show. Renowned for his easygoing and measured delivery Alan is married to Denise and has two young daughters Charlotte aged seven and four-year-old Harriet. Following a recent illness in which Harriet was successfully treated for a mystery virus at Crumlin Children's Hospital, Alan admitted that he was bowled over by the great level of care that was afforded to her and became a champion of the hospital and an outspoken critic of the cutbacks there.

Almost one-year-ago this broadcasting gentleman broadened his horizons when he began hosting TV3's new chat show 'Midday' alongside Colette Fitzpatrick. There, free from the constraints of the newsroom his personality flourished and his straight-talking nature earned him widespread admiration as a chat show host. More surprisingly however is the fact that he has become a very successful Twitterer and has built up a large fan base with his regular rants (he chose the name 'alanrantwell'). His Twitter page is far less restrained than his TV broadcasting and those on the receiving end of his acidic comments have included Joan Burton, Sinn Fein, former soldier Collette McBarron as well as the contestants on Total Xposure - vying to become the new Lorraine Keane - his comments read "Can you imagine the halfwits and dingbats that will apply... compulsive TV."

So who is the real Alan Cantwell? For so long he hid behind the anonymity of the news room but hosting 'Midday' has allowed his personality to shine through. Is he enjoying the fame that comes with this new role? That is the question we put to Alan Cantwell when we met him and his very charming family at Kelly's Hotel in Rosslare. I don't know if you would call it fame but I know what you mean and the answer to your question in a nutshell is yes. News is definitely more impersonal and I enjoy the freedom that presenting Midday brings because it allows you to explore certain areas that you can't do on news. News is very short and is more about delivering than editorializing. Whereas when you get into a programme like Midday you can flesh out the topics a bit more and I suppose it is fair to say that your own personality tends to come out more. There is danger as well when your personality comes out that it can lead you into hot water because people can be surprised when you take a position on something since they were never familiar with you expressing your opinion before.

**Has it landed you in hot water over the past year?** It has from time to time because not everybody agrees with my point of view or the line of questioning I might have taken on a particular issue. For example, a lot of people wouldn't have shared the view that I had following the death of Michael Jackson and the controversy that surrounded his life. Some people believed that what I was saying about his personal life was too close to the bone and they felt that he should have been allowed to be buried in peace and that we should have waited to discuss the controversy surrounding his life until after his burial but I thought it needed to be discussed immediately. There are a lot of unanswered questions surrounding his dubious lifestyle in relation to the child sex abuse allegations and whether or not he was capable of rearing children. I've no doubt that there are questions that will never be answered to the satisfaction

of many individuals to whom his lifestyle appeared imputable.

**Do you think there was too much of a circus made of his death?** Well, my own view was that people were being very selective in terms of what they were discussing about Jackson. They just wanted to focus on his music as opposed to what was going on in his personal life and I found that a little uncomfortable to the extent that we were getting a very myopic view of Jackson. I felt there was another side of Jackson that had to be discussed but nobody was really that prepared to go and discuss it and I said well it's out there, we know these things have happened.

**You will be celebrating your first birthday at Midday soon - how do you feel looking back on the first year?** It was somewhat of a disconcerting experience for me in that it was new territory, up until then I had been very much a newsman. I had to bring a certain amount of personality to Midday which was a little bit difficult initially but then when we settled into it and we gelled together as a group it became that little bit easier. I have to admit though that it was problematic at the beginning like any new programme - you have to find your feet. We knew what we wanted to achieve, we had the road map but at times it wasn't easy to get there because we were all grasping a little bit in the dark. Then things clicked after about four to five weeks and the programme has since grown monumentally.

**What's been the highlight of the past year in terms of interviews- who were your favourite guests?** I can't really say I have favourite guests but I have to admit that the success of the show is down primarily to some of the guests. They don't have to be politicians or captains of industry, they could just be normal guys who run business or they might be involved in the theatre. This morning, for example, we had Rebecca Storm ▶



Harriet wears purple floral dress €42.90 from Benetton, Denise wears broderie anglaise style blouse €115 from Karen Millen, Charlotte wears turquoise dress €46, pink cardigan €30, all from Monsoon.



on and Amanda Brown and Michael Twomey formally from Cha and Mia and Halls Pictorial Weekly - it was the sort of programme that gelled, it was a great intellectual discussion on certain issues which were a bit intense. I walked off thinking I really enjoyed that in terms of guests. I also enjoyed interviewing Ken Livingston, Joe Higgins is another great guest to have on and you can get a banter going with him. Michael Flatley and Lloyd Grossman are other guests that stand out and while it is great having profile guests sometimes it is the less well known people that stick out in my mind.

**Did you have any hairy moments over the past year?** I had a very funny experience and I won't tell you when it was or who it was but when I came to the individual and asked him a question he actually died as we say on air. For a split second or two I just looked at him and I knew in my own mind that I had to jump in and rescue him or it's just going to end very badly! We got through it but it was one of those terrifying moments that you knew if you didn't do something fast you're going to go down with him.

**Is having the right chemistry between the co-presenters important in a show like Middy? How would you describe your relationship with Colette?** I think it's very important to have real chemistry and a good relationship with the individual that you are presenting with. I think, however, that you don't necessarily have to express the same view that they have. In fact I think it's better when somebody has polar opposite views because it makes for a better debate and better conversation. Colette and myself get on great and viewers know that because they can detect if there is a break down in the relationship between the presenters, viewers can tell a lot from the way presenters interact. The beauty about Colette is that she's an intelligent woman, she's great to talk with and she can pick up anything that is thrown at her. We bat off each other beautifully and we both know we can rely on each other.

**What do you think of Ryan Tubridy's selection as Late Late Show host; would he have been your choice?** I know Ryan; I've met him a number of times, socially at some events. He's a lovely guy; I was absolutely delighted that he got the opportunity to present the Late Late Show. I think Ryan's got great depth, great experience and he has the sort of warmth required to pull off the Late Late Show. He has the warmth that Pat Kenny didn't have although Pat was strong in other areas. I think Ryan is the perfect choice. Some people are saying he's too young, that he doesn't have enough experience, but I don't agree, he reminds me of Gay Byrne starting out. The world is Ryan Tubridy's oyster and I think he is definitely the right choice for the programme. ▶



Denise wears broderie anglaise style blouse (as before) and white striped skirt €125 from Karen Millen, Harriet wears purple floral dress (as before), Charlotte wears turquoise dress and pink cardigan (as before), all from Monsoon.





Alan wears beige jacket and navy linen shirt (as before). Harriet wears white peasant style top €15.90 and navy smock style dress €32.90 from Benetton. Charlotte wears navy frill skirt with sequined detail €37 with matching navy leggings €17.90, white vest €29.90 and matching cardigan with floral corsage €37.90 from Sisley. Denise wears striped skirt €110 and navy frill top €90 both from Coast.

**Pat Kenny would have been more of newsman like you; can that be a hindrance when you want to connect with people?** I think that the media were a little bit cruel to Pat who is absolutely comfortable doing the heavier stuff and current affairs. All you have to do is tune into his radio programme for confirmation of that - it's superb. I don't think he had the warmth that Gay Byrne had when he was doing the Late Late but none the less Kenny is a superb broadcaster and he has strengths and weaknesses like we all do.

**What about RTE in general and the astronomical salaries that presenters earn, what are your views on that?** My views are that these guys have agents or people negotiating on their behalf with the pay masters in RTE and they go in there and negotiate the best salary and the best terms that they can possibly get and good luck to them. The majority of people working in RTE don't earn such exorbitant salaries that the main players do and they all have had to take a pay cut to make savings in RTE in order to make it financially viable again in the future.

**A lot of people would find talks of those pay cuts insulting - taking a 10% wage cut if you are earning €500,000 - €800,000 is very different to someone on the average industrial wage of**

**€32,000 taking a 10% wage cut?** I agree yes there are huge disparities there in terms of industrial wage and those who are working in RTE on a contractible basis but remember nobody put a gun to anybody's head to pay this money. The question now is whether or not these huge salaries represent value for money and to my mind paying somebody €600,000 or €700,000 for presenting a daily programme is slightly ludicrous and something that we won't see happening again in the future.

**Bearing in mind the size of this country and the current economic circumstances as well as the fact that the RTE salaries are being paid for by the tax payer can you understand how many people are so outraged by these huge payments?** Absolutely. I think the answer to whether or not this represents value for money is fairly obvious, for somebody to be paid €600,000 or €700,000 to present a two hour radio programme five days a week or to present a two-hour TV show once a week is definitely off the Richter scale. We've got to ask ourselves is it time now to end this regime of what is being paid to individuals to deliver these shows given what the tax payer puts into the pockets of RTE through license fees every year? It's going to have to come to an end.

**What are your views on the recession - did it have to be this severe - would you point the finger of blame at anyone?** I think it's very easy to put forward populous views and beliefs and start pointing fingers of blame. I believe the recession came about as a combination of a number of things such as our over reliance on the property market and the collapse of the banking system in America. All of these parts came together and created a cataclysmic reaction and we have all been affected by it. Ireland has been more affected than other countries and the reason is because of the property bubble that we existed in as well as the sense of euphoria that existed in the Irish economy over the past ten years when we thought that the party would continue forever. We didn't listen to the warnings signs and perhaps if we did our position wouldn't be as serious as it is now. I do believe we will get out of it but it might take a little bit longer than most of us would have anticipated and I think fundamentally we will have to change as a country to avoid going down the same road again.

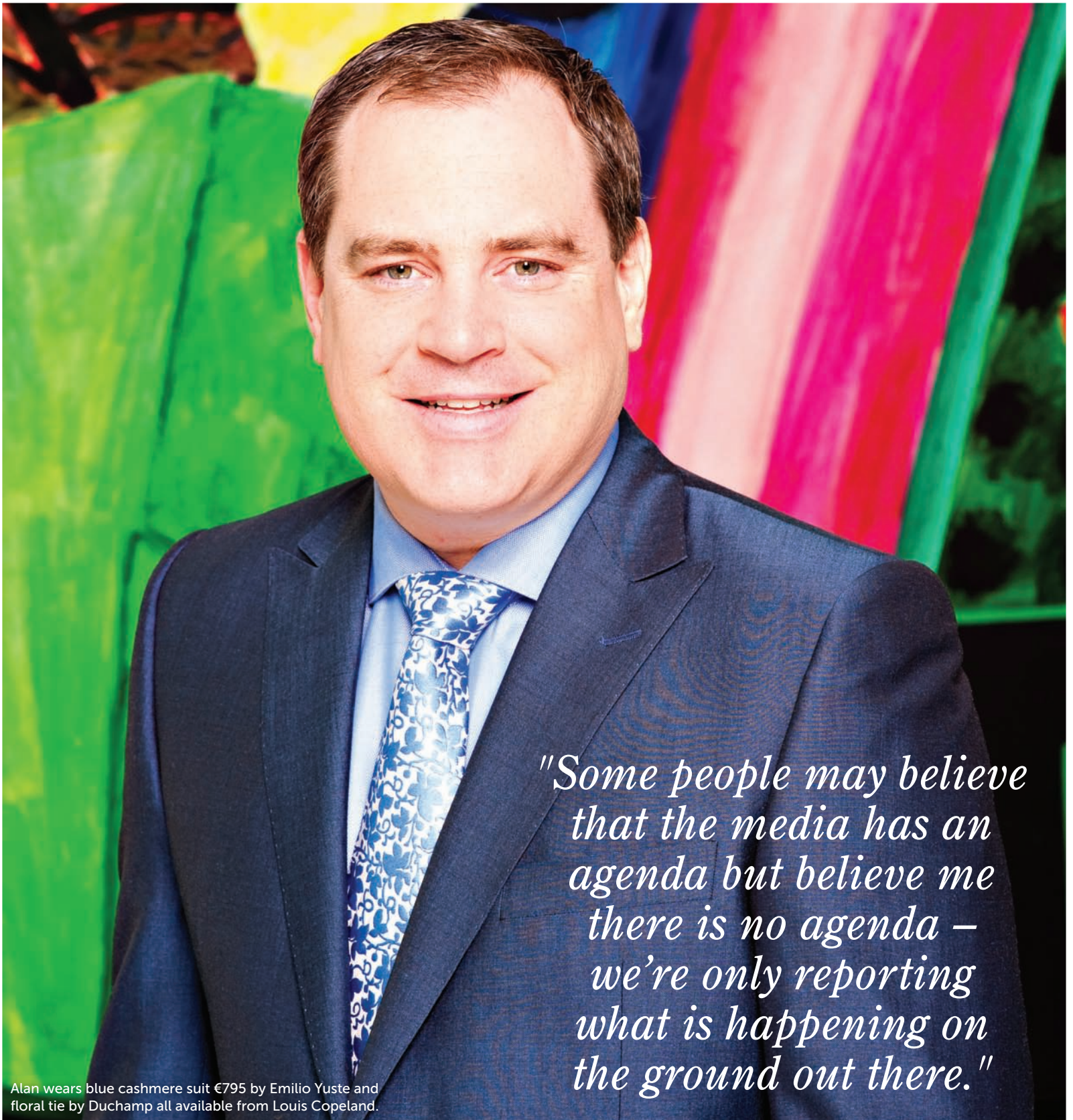
**How do we have to change?** Well we have to become less greedy, we have to look at what we are in terms of a nation, how do we make our money, we have to become an export nation more than anything else, we have to start manufacturing goods in order to sell ►





Alan wears beige jeans €239.50 by Brioni, blue polo €89.50 by Ramsay all from Louis Copeland.





Alan wears blue cashmere suit €795 by Emilio Yuste and floral tie by Duchamp all available from Louis Copeland.

*"Some people may believe that the media has an agenda but believe me there is no agenda – we're only reporting what is happening on the ground out there."*

them abroad. We have to examine what was driving the economy before and why it failed. When the bubble burst we had nowhere to go and that must not happen again.

**Bearing in mind that there is so much unemployment in the country now have you noticed a change in your audience in terms of their attitudes as well as the demographic breakdown in terms of age and sex?** The one thing that I have noticed is the age profile of the audience has begun to shift downwards in that there are quite a number of young people who are watching Middy. Up until recently they would have been at work but now so many people have lost their jobs. We are seeing a lot of anger out there in relation to job losses and there is definitely a lack of hope among

the public. You get the sense that people feel that there is a lack of leadership in the part of politicians across the political divide. The public feel that they are being forgotten about and that there is no hope for them.

**Do you see any Barack Obama type of leader that might be the ideal person to lead us out of this recession?** Politically there is nobody that I believe can step up to the mark like Obama and lead the country out of recession. We could analyse what business men or captains of industry might bring to the table but then again that's a populous view – just because they are captains of industry doesn't necessarily mean that their expertise would translate efficiently to lead the country to what we would call the promised land. However, it would be worth putting together some sort of steering

committee of captains of industry and business men to create a discussion paper that could be adopted by the government or certain aspects of it.

**Who would you put on that committee?** People like Michael Smurfit, Denis O'Brien and Michael O'Leary – you may not like O'Leary but he's a good business man, those sorts of names I'd be thinking about. I would include JP McManus as well.

**Can it be difficult for people to have hope when the news is constantly full of doom and gloom?** I think, in the main journalists try as much as possible to put forward a balanced view but let's look what has happened in Ireland, particularly in the last six to eight months. We are in uncharted waters. We don't go ▶



out there and make the bad news up – it lands on our desks every day. We are reporting the news that is out there. Yes, there are some good news stories as well but my God they are few and far between. Some people may believe that the media has an agenda but believe me there is no agenda – we're only reporting what is happening on the ground out there.

**What would you say to the people who have given up on news because they find it too depressing?** I can sympathise with them, sometimes I wake up in the morning and I listen to the news and I think here we go again - more job losses - another depressing ERSI report and sometimes I feel I can't deal with it myself so I do know what you are talking about. On days like that I try to switch off and perhaps give it a break and then return to it at lunch time. It can be very demoralizing to have this sort of news pumped at you every day. I'm beginning to get the feeling that those negative stories may be beginning to change just a little bit, not hugely but just a little bit.

**Your Twitter page has proven to be hugely popular – did that surprise you?** Yes and God knows why because I certainly don't know. What I enjoy about Twitter is that you can vent your spleen on it. You don't have to do a blog, you throw something out there see what bounces back and rate it. It's a bit of fun more than anything else. I do enjoy it, sometimes I would say certain things on Twitter that perhaps I couldn't say on air.

**You have had a go at Joan Burton and Sinn Fein on your page?** What I said about Joan was she tends to wail like a banshee and I stand by that but you would also have read that I admire her as an intellectual and as a great politician, somebody who has something to offer but, by God, she can whine when she wants to. On Sinn Fein, sometimes when I listen to their debates on the economy I think they don't have a realistic grasp on what is going on in the real world and that they are indulging in a sort of pop culture of economics. I just don't think there is a place for what they have to offer in the present economic climate. It's not that I dislike what they are about I just would question some of the policies.

**Who would be your top three dream guests on Middy?** Vincent Brown without question, Heather Small, lead singer of M People, and my third choice would be Jeremy Paxman.

**What TV personality do you admire?** I would be more of a fan of radio so my favourite broadcaster would be from that medium although he did cross over into television – the late Alistair Cooke and that great BBC series 'Letter from America'. It was one of the greatest pieces of radio ever put together and I think the longest running radio series too. I would also have a great deal of respect for Jeremy Paxman as a journalist.

**What's your philosophy for a happy life?** Try not to take yourself too seriously and take every day as it comes! **RSVP**

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Alan wears beige jacket, dark jeans and navy linen shirt (as before). Denise wears striped skirt and navy frill top (as before).