

IRISH TATLER

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35 EASY
updates

ESCAPE
The new hot spots

MARIA DOYLE KENNEDY

ON HER BIG MUSICAL COMEBACK



CONTRIBUTORS



ELAINE SULLIVAN

When word reached us about the good work at new salon Aviary Lane, we immediately wanted to buddy up for The Ultimate Girls Day Out. "Having just opened, it was our first outing but we knew we had to say YES! We kept the looks simple and sleek, in other words sore and sorer for the poor models; classic ponytails alternating with distressed fish-tale braids." And how goes the work? "We are in our second month now and we can't remember what we did before Aviary Lane, sleep, I think! We're really hopeful for the years ahead, we've already seen our team grow. We want to fill the void between comfort and excellence in the same place."



PAMELA LAIRD

Our go-to nail artist Pamela was at hand (literally) for our accessories shoot on page 74, creating a striking two-tone look. "I took the classic idea of the Naked Moon look with a touch of 'now'. We were playing around with which shade of red to use and came up with Chanel classic Rouge Noir as the moon and Chanel Cherry Red Pirate on the rest of the nail." This season, nails are the ultimate accessory, and Pamela shares just how we should be wearing ours: "The classic autumnal palette is really on trend this season and using two colours on the nails is going to be big. Chanel have really embraced the nail art trend and are always a step ahead!"



CAMILLA MORTON

Author of several books on her passion of shoes, Camilla Morton shared with us her feelings on the power of the heel on page 30. She has just finished the third in her collaborative collection of fairy tales with Diane von Furstenburg, but her hero when it comes to footwear is a certain Mr Blahnik. "Cinderella had a fairygodmother and I am lucky enough to have Manolo Blahnik! Why do I love shoes? The colours, the heels, the glamour, the way they make you feel, the way they don't tut when you have an extra biscuit, the way they like to go out dancing. Heels quite literally 'lift you', they make you feel feminine and feisty and have the world looking up to you."



NAOMI FITZGIBBON

Naomi Fitzgibbon is the Cancer Information Service Manager with the Irish Cancer Society, which operates a free helpline to those dealing with their own or a loved one's diagnosis. For our breast cancer awareness special, Naomi shares her story to help educate women on what they need to be looking out for when it comes to breast changes. "We know that women now are much more breast aware than they were before, which is fantastic. They are aware of the risk factors that increase the chances of getting breast cancer, the most important one being that they're female, and then increasing age – they're the two biggest risks." Read more on page 102.

ON THE COVER



MARIA DOYLE KENNEDY WEARS
Vintage dress (€240) by Dirty Fabulous;
feather earrings (€189) by Alex Monroe
and ring (€75) both @ Knightsbridge

JOIN US!

Irish Tatler is online, Tweeting and updating ferociously with all the behind-the-scenes info from our shoots, tittle-tattle from the social circuit and daily style musings. Join us online and be the first to know about exclusive offers, backstage gossip and what's coming up in each and every issue. As always, we welcome all feedback with arms flung open, so drop us a comment too. facebook.com/IrishTatler
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IRISH TATLER

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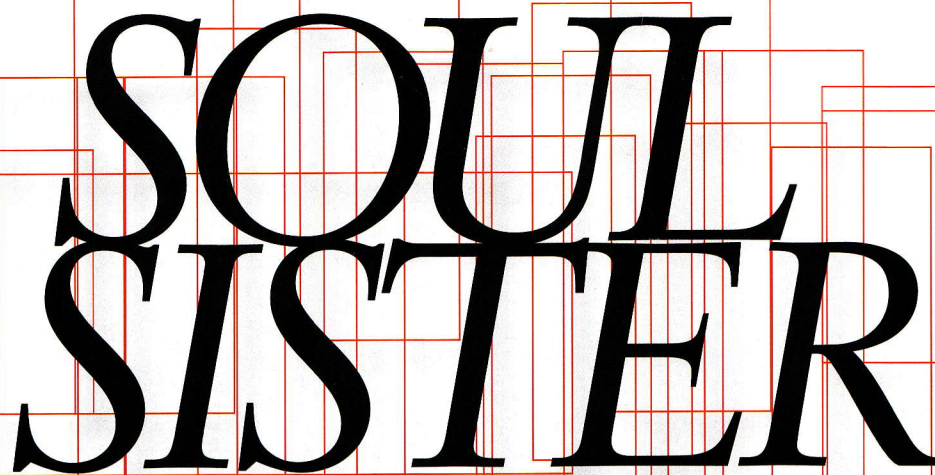
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23,919 (ABC January 2011 - December 2011)





SOUL SISTER

As Maria Doyle Kennedy prepares to re-enter the musical spotlight she talks to Shauna O'Halloran about a lifetime of love, singing and taking the family on the road.

Photography by Barry McCall.

Sitting down to interview Maria Doyle Kennedy, I feel a bit like I'm sitting in her home. I'm not – I'm in the same cafeteria attached to the same studio that we interview many of our cover stars in, but Maria – after hours of hair, makeup and camera – is utterly at ease. She sits comfortably across from me while her husband and collaborator Kieran (Kennedy) taps away on his MacBook, headphones on, at the next table. Occasionally they communicate in one word sentences (they have been married for 24 years already), the way only people who have been together for a long time can. It's difficult to explain, other than to say they simply own the space that they inhabit, for that hour.

Maria's here to promote her new album, *Sing*, released under their own label Mermaid Records, which the couple set up in 2001. It's the sixth album she and Kieran have put out under Mermaid Records, but it's the first to be distributed by Warner Music not just here in Ireland, but also in the UK. "Something seems to be happening with this one. It seems to be getting legs of its own," says Maria, as we sit down to discuss her latest venture. "I think it's the best thing we've ever made," she adds, by way of explaining why it seems to be gathering so much pace. "I think you have to have that first of all, and then you have to work your arse off, and we've been doing that! And then you need to have a little bit of luck as well, and something seems to be happening, somehow."

The album hit the shelves on 24 August, a veritable melting pot of Celtic melodies, bluegrass and folk undertones and hints of previous albums' influences too, from Appalachian to new rock. And of course, there's the voice; Maria's velvety rich voice above it all. The title track, *Sing*, is a duet with another of Ireland's best-loved singer-songwriters, Damien Rice, and is one of three vocal collaborations on the album. The others are Paul Brady and, in Maria's own words 'the incredibly legendary' US country artist John Prine.

The rest of the album is Maria and husband Kieran, who plays almost everything on the album and also produced it. "But some friends came in every so often for just a little decoration," says Maria. "Dónal Lunny also plays on it...he's a friend but a hero of ours, a musical hero, and some other friends did some extra little things. There's little gestures of friendship added by others along the way." It's a beautiful description of what sounds like an incredibly organic creative process, and while for the most part the husband and wife team are co-creators that need no infiltration, Maria admits that having outside artists join them at work has helped the album arrive at its final destination. "If you collaborate with people you admire that much, like Dónal or John,

Vintage brocade bombshell dress (€240) by Dirty Fabulous; feather earrings (€189) by Alex Monroe @ Knightsbridge Boutique; gold vermeil green stone ring (€75) @ Knightsbridge Boutique



or Paul or Damien, it really makes you make sure you're on top of your own game."

"As soon as you introduce a new person into a situation, you just start listening to it with new ears – you hear things new, it's great."

For the most part, Maria is the lyricist and vocalist in the duo, while Kieran writes the music and produces the finished work. This album has been two years in the making. "It takes me a while to make an album," says Maria, adding that she is not like some artists who are "very prolific and write a lot of songs." I put it to her that she must have been busy with other projects too. In the last 24 months, it seems she has been on our screens regularly; in the hugely successful *Downton Abbey*, the specially commissioned *Titanic* mini-series and season five of the US Showtime series *Dexter*, the finale of which attracted some 2.5million viewers. "It seems like that, but actually, it's not the way. I think it just seems like that because a couple of the things I did have been very prominent, but it didn't take up very much of my time at all," she admits, adding that she hasn't filmed anything since February.

Acting, it seems, has always played a serious second fiddle to her music career, despite the fact that it was her role in the 1991 film *The Commitments* that brought her to public attention, and the TV roles from Catherine of Aragon in *The Tudors*, to that stint as Vera Bates in *Downton Abbey* that have kept her in the mainstream's eye in recent years. "Music is such a massive part of the fabric of my world. My mother said that she can remember me singing as a tot, and as a teenager she measured my mood by the amount of singing that she could hear," she tells me. "Whereas acting – certainly it's part of me as well, I really enjoy it and it's another way of telling a story, and that makes you think about stories and characters and people's ways of living in another way. But I'll never miss it when I'm not doing it, it's not part of the fabric in the same way."

All the same, there have been some highlights in some of the higher profile television work that she has undertaken recently, namely meeting some of her own heroes, and getting to be the baddie. "It was pretty exciting to just be at a read-through with Maggie Smith and Penelope Wilton (for *Downton Abbey*). I have been a fan of those two women in particular; I've seen them on stage and followed them in theatre, and that was just kind of brilliant." And being the villain? First in *Downton Abbey*, and then as the somewhat bitter Muriel Batley in the multi-million pound dramatisation of the sinking of the *Titanic*? "It was just total chance! But it is of course [fun being the villain], you get to do that without real life consequences of your actions, yeah, of course."

While on-screen work isn't keeping her busy, her four sons, who range from four years old to 27, certainly are. "If you have children they take up a lot [of time/energy], especially when they're small – you have to prioritise what's going on for them. It's not so much that I'm lazy about making the music, but I leave it until the song is absolutely banging on the inside of my head saying: Can you please write this down."

Her four sons, probably because they range so much in age, are, she says, great champions of each other. "They're never really competing for the same space I think, so they're very united. It's an unusual family, but it really works for us; they're very close and

we're very close to them." It's a combination of that closeness and the spread of ages across the children that has allowed Maria and Kieran to find a way to make their family and professional lives work in tandem over the years. "There's no point in saying it's always easy as if it's some totally plain sailing thing," she asserts first and foremost when asked about her work/life balance. "There was only one very small person at a time, and that sort of made it manageable for me."

"But the key thing is that we're united about it as a team. Because we're both artists, we're both freelance, if one person gets some work that's good, and that is financially going to be able to hold the whole thing together for a while, then the other person could choose not to work and do more of the childminding." And by holding it all together, she really means moving the family as a unit or not being away from home for too long. "We never spend much time away from the kids or from each other," she says, the compromise being that if you can't earn enough to take everyone with you, you don't take the job. "Sometimes we've had to say, well, we can't do that – it seems like good work, but there's no money really, and it would mean being separate, and that doesn't work." The arrangement means short stints of intensive gigs instead of three or six month tours, in what Maria dubs 'guerilla gigging'. "We go away for a week or ten days, and then go back for the rest of the month. We can all cope with that – we can cope with that much time away from them, and we can manage to get them looked after well for that amount of time, and the wheels don't come off the wagon entirely!"

It's a juggling act not unfamiliar to many of us in 2012, where two parent families are often both working, and one-parent families try to manage the juggling act with a single hand. "Sometimes, you do feel like you're sticking it all together with sellotape," she says frankly. "And I do have pretty massive, extensive lists of who's getting a lift where on Thursday at 3 o'clock. And sometimes it does all feel like everything's getting stretched a bit thin and we're not really doing things as well as we want to be, but that's life, I think. Life's not perfect – I'm okay with that."

"I think they all know that they're really loved, and then... everything's not perfect, and they're learning that too. I think it makes them flexible people."

Their parents being who they are also makes them talented musicians, every one, although Maria doesn't think any of her sons will take up music as a career as she has.

Somewhat surprisingly, Maria doesn't herself come from a particularly musical family, although she can recall song always being a part of her life. "My parents are of a generation where when they had a party or a wedding or a funeral, at a certain stage of the evening, they got to their party pieces," she recounts. "We used to sneak down, myself and my brother and sister, when we were small. We progressed from the landing to the edge of the room, and then as we got a little bit older, we were allowed to help serve the drinks."

It was at one such family get-together where she had her first taste

*'Life's not PERFECT
I'm okay with that'*

€225) by Michael
Brown Thomas;
earrings (€153) by
of Harlow @ The
Center

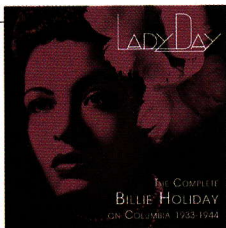




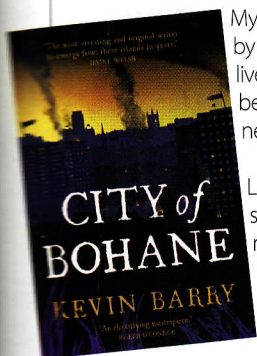
Full length sequin dress,
Maria's own

MARIA CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT...

One of the first voices that deeply, deeply moved me was BILLIE HOLIDAY. I was given music of hers and I just couldn't believe her voice. It was just really amazing.



My favourite book at the moment is CITY OF BOHANE by Kevin Barry. I disappeared into it's world and the lives of Bohane's fairly unhinged population and have been really inspired by it to write new songs.



Lancôme very kindly sent me some of their GÉNEFIQUE moisturiser, so I have been moisturising my head off ever since!



I think my must-have beauty thing though is not a product, it is enough SLEEP. I look like an entirely different person when I manage to pull that off.

I asked you that time, I didn't have a band. I wanted to ask you out, and I knew that you mightn't say yes', so he actually invented a band, got the band together, got somebody to pay for them to record and everything...and I'd no idea!"

Music got them together, and now, she says, it keeps them together. "If you're not getting on in real life, and you have to do a gig or you're communicating some way musically, that's a communication that doesn't need words. So if you just go for it, you can kind of forget about the row, and you're communicating on an instinctive level," she says. Unless, of course, it happens the other way around:

"Occasionally, that does as well! In the space where you're supposed to be creating something together, and one of you's in a big huff! [laughs] But the music just seems to sort that out itself. I guess we're both just so in love with music that that sucks us in before we realise that we're still annoyed!"

That's not to say that part of their success as both a couple and a creative duo isn't down to hard work and sensible life rules. These include making sure they take up some projects independently of each other, and trying to leave work discussions out of their family time. "If your kitchen table is your office, then it's always open for discussion. It's difficult, but again, it's like anybody who works from home, that they try and regulate themselves or their hours so that they do stop."

For now Maria and Kieran are finished making their music – at least for this album. *Sing* is celebrating it's big launch with a gig at Vicar Street on 29 September, and it will be touring and promoting this most widely distributed album of hers ever next.

And through it all, Maria – mother, wife, singer and actor – seems grounded, balanced, and never caught up in what could be a very frivolous industry. In fact, she outright rejects the notion that women, or anyone, should be striving to 'have it all'. "Do you mean having a perfect life? If so, the answer is that in my experience, that is not possible. My life is not perfect and I have never met anyone whose life is," she states. "Many people do not want or choose to have a family and I don't think that means that their lives are in any way less valid or fulfilled or less 'all'."

"I have a family and I am very thankful of that and it's a (sometimes crazy) juggling act."

But, she points out, it is not a solo juggling act. Not for her, and nor should it be for women alone, despite the burden of 'juggling' often surveyed by society as being exclusively female. "Why does nobody ever ask my husband (or other male working artists) that question?" She puts to me, as final food for thought. "Is it an assumption that that is a right for men/a crazily put together compromise for women?"

"These kinds of things are important for women to think about I think, important to me certainly." ■

For tickets to *Sing* at Vicar Street, visit ticketmaster.ie/mariadoylekennedy.com

of being in the spotlight. "I think I was 13 or something, in this tiny little room; everyone was packed around on sofas and little stools...there's nothing grand about this scenario that I'm depicting! But I sang, of course, one of the songs I had heard them singing. Afterwards, there was this kind of slight...tumbleweed. And I was like 'oh God, was that not any good?'"

"Afterwards, one of my aunts took me aside and said, 'You're after singing your aunty Vera's song. And she only has the one!' It was a good lesson in social graces!"

Even after this first brush with performance, it took until her college years for Maria to realise that pursuing her passion would be possible as a career path. Now she says there could never have been an alternative way to spend her life. "There has never been anything else," she states. "It wasn't until I went to college that I met anybody who played anything, and they were like, 'let's get a band together,' and I was like: 'of course, why didn't I think of that before?' But I had no experience of that, I had no example of it around me, so it just didn't really strike me as something to do. But then I knew, that's definitely what I'm going to do."

So intrinsic to her life now, it was music that also led to her 24-year marriage. "We met after a gig one time and he asked me to sing. He knew I was a singer, and he asked me to come and sing on a demo he was making...We went and made the demo, and it went on from there – we fell in love, and got married very quickly." What Maria didn't know at the time, and didn't find out until some ten years later, was that Kieran in fact had no band, no demo to record, when he initially asked. "He said, 'actually, you know what, when