



Daniel's new manager once re-launched Johnny Cash in Ireland!

Daniel's new manager, Kieran Cavanagh, is no stranger to working with major music stars. He once went to the other end of the earth (almost!) to re-launch the career of Country Legend Johnny Cash in Ireland.

"The first big Country act I ever promoted was Johnny Cash. I was only in my late 20's when I went over to Nashville on a mission to bring Johnny Cash back to Ireland because I saw that he had not toured there in about ten years. Being a huge Country music fan, I understood a lot about the artists and I felt that Johnny should be touring in my country".

"But when I got to Nashville, they told me that they only booked him domestically in the US from there and his international bookings had to be done with his manager Lou Robin in Los Angeles. So I had to high-tail it on another flight to LA and when I arrived, it was the day of the big earthquake there and LA was shut down for two days as a result. I had to sit in my hotel room, through the curfew, before eventually meeting Johnny's manager. We made the deal and he came to Ireland and sold out every venue. After that, I brought him back every two years for another eight years, until, for health reasons he could no longer tour," says Kieran.

That success opened doors in Nashville for him to all the major acts, and after that, he promoted stars such as Kenny Rogers (first ever tour of Ireland) Tammy Wynette, George Jones, Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson, Buck Owens, Waylon Jennings, Glen Campbell, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Alison Krauss, Trisha Yearwood, Crystal Gayle and countless others.

"Once I had successfully promoted Johnny Cash, the agents in the US felt I had cut my teeth in the promotion business and I had a huge flow of American Country talent touring for my company for the following 15 years, until some of them unfortunately passed away, or others were no longer able to tour due to age or health reasons," he added.

In 1995 the CMA (Country Music association of America) honoured Kieran with an award for "European promoter of the year". The award was presented to Kieran in Nashville's Convention Centre by the then president of the CMA Tony Conway.

In 1999 Kieran formed and produced a dance show called 'Rhythm Of The Dance' which has since toured in 58 countries worldwide and after more than 17 years, it continues to tour for him in all continents. But he has worked with Daniel promoting his tours in Ireland for even longer than this, as Kieran explains.

"I have been promoting Daniel's concerts in Ireland for 29 years now, but as a working musician myself in younger years, I knew Daniel long before I started promoting his concerts. I first met him through a friend of mine, Gerry Reynolds, who played in Margo O'Donnell's Band when Daniel first started out. I first promoted his concerts in 1988 through Sean Reilly who was his then manager, and when he was moving from the dancing scene to the concerts, I took charge of them and our first outing was a full week of concerts in the Gaiety Theatre in Dublin."

"That was ambitious in 1988, but we sold it out. After that we did about 15-20 concerts annually during Daniel's summer tours in Ireland, nearly every year to the present time. Apart from Daniel taking one year off we have never missed a year. We have also done seasons in the INEC in Killarney and we did the 3Arena or The Point in Dublin, as it was known in the past, first selling it out in 1992, which was a big achievement then. We have also sold out Christmas shows at The Convention Centre in Dublin in recent years with one of those also becoming a TV special."

Kieran says he was honoured and delighted to be asked by both Daniel and Sean Reilly to manage him back in 2015 when Sean was retiring. *"I had managed some Irish country Artists in the past, but I had been out of managing for some years. I also managed the legendary Jerry Lee Lewis for two years from 1996-1998"*

"I did three or four months of transition sessions with Sean at his office and his home and he was most gracious with his time in handing over the management role. It was a bit like a smooth transition at The White House," says Kieran with a laugh.



Daniel and Manager Kieran Cavanagh in Sri Lanka

"I was in Daniel's musical family anyway since I started doing the tours with him and I knew how Daniel likes to work and how important the fans are to him. The fans are his number one priority and I've always known that he cares greatly about them. I've taken that approach too in promoting him over the years, as the fans are the important ones, while I've also got involved in the other aspects of his career now, such as the recording side and his ever increasing TV work.

It has all worked out well and, similar to a long haul plane on a smooth flight, we have now reached cruising altitude and the climb into the role of his manager is now complete for me.. I was also lucky to get Joan O'Neill, who was in Sean Reilly's office for 15 years, to move with me into the new set-up. Along with Joan, I also have a wonderful support team in my office with Mary Hamilton, Annemarie Carey, Pat Burke and Ken Cavanagh."

It is a long time since Kieran got involved in the music business himself shortly after doing his Leaving Certificate examination in 1974, in his native Easky in Co. Sligo.

"My mother wanted me to get a 'steady job' with the Department of Post & Telegraphs (P&T) in Ireland but I had other ideas. That September, I left home with a bass guitar under my arm and got a job with the Lola & New Blues Showband in Dublin. I eventually became band leader and later on was promoted to co-manager and I'm afraid the day job with the P&T was put on the long finger ever since. I kept telling my mother that I would get the 'real job' as soon as possible, but when I arrived home one weekend, after being a musician for six months, in a Mini car that I had bought, my mother said that I must be doing OK if I could afford to buy a car! . I was raised on a farm and my father also had the local butcher shop in Easky, which my family still have today with my nephew Gary continuing to carry on the family business in the town, with the Cavanagh name still over the door, it would please my father to see it", he says.

While Kieran Cavanagh has travelled a very different route in life and toured his Rhythm of the Dance show for the past 17 years in places around the world such as Siberia, South America, China, Taiwan and India, to name but a few. He is really delighted with the success that Daniel O'Donnell is now enjoying in Sri Lanka.

"During Daniel's tours in Australia and New Zealand over the past few years, I was intrigued that he could also sell out arenas in Sri Lanka. Now that I am his manager, I travelled over there to see for myself those two shows that he was playing in Colombo last April."

"It was absolutely fascinating to see all those Sri Lankan people, no ex-pats there, all singing along to every one of Daniel's songs. They knew them all, they love his songs and they love their Country 'n' Irish music. Daniel has broken through to the audiences there via the radio and there are many stations playing his records including Gold Fm and Legends Fm. They have been playing other international acts as well such as Cliff Richard, who has been major star in Sri Lanka for many years, as well as also playing the music of other Irish artists too, such as Foster and Allen. After watching at first hand the way our music can reach out to the people of Sri Lanka at Daniel's recent concerts in Colombo, I came away saying 'wow, this is amazing' and it is something that we intend to expand on in other countries". Daniel's new manager sees similar potential for him in other Asian countries and in central and northern Europe as well.



Daniel with his Manager Kieran Cavanagh at the Hilton Hotel in Sri Lanka

"I have huge ambitions for Daniel as I think he is unique and a wonderful entertainer. There are very few artists in the world that I can compare him to and my ambition for him is to do various other things and to break into new international markets.

Daniel just smiles when I tell him of some of my plans and I hope he is enthused by my enthusiasm. He can still break new markets in Germany, Holland and Denmark, where they love their Country music, but Daniel has never played in those countries. I feel that if we can get him on TV over there, he will sell out concerts across Europe and in other Asian countries too.

He is interested in doing that and it delights me that he still has that enthusiasm and excitement in him as a performer to want to break into new territories. I also hope we can get more of his shows on UK TV too, similar to the B&B shows and others that have attracted huge audiences on TV in Ireland. That is one part of my plan while I also believe that Daniel's next studio album will be a really big one for him. I am currently negotiating a global record deal with one of the biggest record companies in the industry."

Daniel's last album, Back Home Again, gave him his 31st Pop chart hit in the UK and also charted for him in Australia and New Zealand where major international label Sony are distributing it. It is also doing well in the US where Sony is also marketing it.

"This album was a double CD, plus a DVD, of a show that we were commissioned to film in the RTE studios in Dublin for Public Television (PBS) in America. He is a huge artist for PBS over there and the show that is on the DVD went out all over the USA last March. From that TV production we have also taken three one hour long shows which will be screened by RTE 1 TV this June on Friday nights."

Daniel's new manager is also delighted with the way his new band has gelled so well with the singer. He feels that with their different sound, more traditional instruments such as fiddle, bodhran, banjo, mandolin, tin whistle, etc, while also retaining the accordion, they are giving Daniel a new energy on stage. But he credits band leader Steve Milne with putting the new band together.

"Steven hand-picked the musicians and he would then run his decisions by me. I was thrilled with the calibre of musicians that he was bringing to the show for Daniel and I think we have hit the jackpot with the new band. They are energised and the amount of energy and musical ability now coming from the stage is just second to none. I think the show now, including Daniel, Mary Duff and backing vocalist Trionagh Allen are all just on fire from the moment they hit the stage until the last notes are played."

"The break from touring did Daniel good also and we are playing over 100 concerts around the world this year," concluded Kieran.