

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Rock 'n' Roll Kids Brendan on singing on his first album

WRITING hits such as the multi-million selling *You Raise Me Up*, Eurovision winners *Rock 'n' Roll Kids* and *The Voice* plus *Isle of Hope* has seen locally based songwriter Brendan Graham become one of the most successful songwriters of this generation.

However, he never raised up his own voice on any recordings until now with his debut album *The Arrow of Time*.

Listeners will find more soulful and thought-provoking songs rather than bouncy Rock 'n' Roll for the kids, young or old, on this new album.

The stunningly beautiful *Sleepsong* calls on angels to guide a loved one safely on life's journey and *The Deepening Silence* has memories of another loved one who has passed on but may still be here - perhaps in spirit?

Brendan, who grew up in Ballinasloe and now lives near Cong, told *The Tuam Herald* that he, like so many others, questions where does time go?

"The whole concept of the album is all about time and how we are fascinated about it. I suppose the longer I'm alive there's less time here ahead of me than what I've left behind," laughed the 'almost' 81-year-old.

But when it's mentioned that he doesn't look anything like that age, he responds with a quick-fire answer. "It's the way that the lighting is done on my photographs".

While *The Voice* was one of his Eurovision-winning songs he says it was one he wasn't going to record.

"I thought I wouldn't be able to sing it, but Eimear Quinn suggested that I read it, and she would sing around my narration. She was in the studio with me the same day as Charlie McGettigan and Paul Harrington and so there was a real connection between us all with Eurovision 1994 and 1996.

Charlie and Paul reconnected with Brendan for his other Eurovision winner *Rock 'n' Roll Kids* with all three effortlessly blending vocally on this new recording of it.

Brendan does his most successful song *You Raise Me Up* himself as a monologue on this album with his co-writer of the melody Rolf Loveland playing the piano.

Meanwhile the lyrics in a new song on this

The man who penned many big music hits



Country Crossroads by Tom Gilmore

set, *Did I Not Love You*, seem to suggest that Brendan knew someone in the past in another life. So, does he believe in an afterlife or reincarnation?

"I think about the afterlife, and if our souls stay connected, some people believe it and others don't. On some of those songs I was raising that question to maybe comfort myself and those close to me that perhaps there is an afterlife and that our songs can still be heard.

"Did I Not Love You, emerged from a melody that Rolf Loveland of Secret Garden sent me, (He first came up with the melody for *You Raise Me Up*). I lock myself into a room with a melody to listen to it over and over again. So, I sometimes go into another space when working on song words and that's when ideas often come to me.

"In that one, the idea was about crossing an



SONGWRITER Brendan Graham working at his piano.

“**Maybe we should put more time into our relationships too with those that we are because time is an arrow that keeps winging away with, and we shouldn't waste it**

ocean, and meeting someone that I seemed to know from before, so in the lyrics I was crossing an ocean of time," he added.

Brendan says that he "works backwards" by doing the title from listening firstly to the melody and then he writes the chorus before penning the verses that will lead to the chorus.

"I remember writing *Did I Not Love You* on a dark windy night in my home in the West. I was looking out at the lake and there was a sense of otherworldliness about the scene outside. Maybe with the door opened the spirits of the night came in and inspired me," he mused with a wry smile.

Brendan added, "I don't know how I get into this space when writing songs, but I know it when I'm in it. I wanted to recapture the atmosphere in the room that dark night in the lyrics.

Brendan admits that he was "totally terrified" when he sang *I Want to Go to Venice*, with the RTE Symphony Orchestra in the National Concert Hall last January.

"My thoughts that night was that if I've done this to so many singers, getting them to sing my songs on stage for the first time, then why don't I do it to myself."

"The inspiration for writing the Venice song came from a trip my wife and I had there when the kids were young and we always wanted to go back. Then, coincidentally, while I was writing this song, the kids said they were sending us on a trip to Venice for my 75th birthday," he laughed.

Only then did Brendan tell his family that the very song he was actually working on was about Venice. It has some strange lines about it disappearing under the sea like the mythical lost continent Atlantis.

There is another strange theme in *The Songman* which mentions the Gospel of St John, the apocalypse, the end of the world "with a hidden hand behind it all" (perhaps God?).

"It will end for all of us some day and the world will end too at some stage for all," he added nonchalantly.

The title of *What If There Is No Tomorrow* succinctly sums up so well that we should strive for happiness and peace in this world rather than conflict.

"We fall out with people and have negative thoughts about them. But what's the point and if we knew that today was our last day wouldn't we put our pride aside and be a little bit humble with people and dance rather than fighting," says Brendan. He co-wrote this song with Fergal Murray and Camile O'Sullivan and there is a simulated "person's last breath" on this track which Camile did.

"I hope the songs aren't too morose," says Brendan, who added that the track *Hurry Home* was the catalyst for the album's title *The Arrow of Time*.

"Maybe we should put more time into our relationships too with those that we are with, because time is an arrow that keeps winging away and we shouldn't waste it," says Brendan wistfully.

The two years he spent on this album, which may yield more gems of hitherto unmined hits, weren't wasted by this multi-million selling, unassuming songwriter whose first big double success was in 1980 when Frank McCaffrey recorded *Sing Me an Old Irish Song* and also winning The Manorhamilton Song Contest.



BRENDAN with Charlie McGettigan and Paul Harrington recording the new version of the Eurovision winning song *Rock n Roll Kids*. PHOTO: CONOR GALLAGHER



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