

Liam O Maonlai

“...the one thing that gets you... is THAT voice. Liam O Maonlai is the best live singer I have ever heard – his range beggar’s belief...” – **Kildare Nationalist**

“...the best white boy soul singer on the planet...” – **Bono, U2**

... Heady words indeed, yet just the most recent in a long line of kudos for one of Ireland’s most charismatic musical treasures, Liam O Maonlai. Best known as the lead singer/pianist for the Celtic soul’n’roll band, Hothouse Flowers, he has also enjoyed a concurrent career as a traditional Irish musician and singer. Indeed, much of the Flowers’ appeal has been based on their passion for and commitment to fusing their Irish heritage with rock, pop, soul and world music influences—a passion and commitment that has informed most of Liam’s musical life.

With a solo endeavor now coming to the forefront of an adventurous and uniquely varied career, Liam is anticipating spreading his wings—and taking off in all directions. “Having spent twenty years giving a great deal of my energy to the rock and roll stage, I am looking forward to devoting more time and energy to the tradition that nourishes me and the traditions that inspire me.”

Raised in Dublin as an Irish speaker, Liam’s love for his heritage was instilled by his father, whom Liam has described as ‘a very fine singer.’ “My father taught me to sing at his knee ... in the old language that still lives in different parts of Ireland.” With their roots deep in the West in County Kerry, the family traveled there often, immersing themselves in the Gaeltacht where the native language and culture survives, despite systematic efforts to eradicate it. “I found incredible cultural fulfillment there. The Irish language is still spoken there; everyone speaks it, kids are brought up speaking it. And it’s amazing for that reason.”

A second set of roots, as deep as those instilled by his father, were those instilled by Liam’s mother. “My mother made me realise what good piano playing was. From her I learned an appreciation for music from classical to Flamenco and African. We partook in many cultural events and gatherings as a family as I grew.”

These roots entwined and blossomed into the multi-cultural music that Liam has engaged in during his career. And always, even through the American R’n’B and soul influences evident in the Flowers’ music, there has always been the strong commitment to the Irish heritage.

Liam’s free spirit has taken him into many collaborations—from distinguished Irish musicians (Sharon Shannon, Mary Black, Maire Breatnach, Liam O’Flynn, The Waterboys, Donal Lunny, Luka Bloom) to musicians in other traditions in all parts of the world (Joe Higgs [*the “Godfather of Reggae”*], Yothu Yindi, Carlos Nunez, the Kodo Drummers,

Carly Simon, Indigo Girls, Goanna, Rex Talousi of the Hava Soupai tribe (Grand Canyon), Ron Wood [Rolling Stones], Def Leppard, the Aboriginal singers of the White Cockatoo, and groups from West Papua, to name a few). He formed a band with Belfast-born Andy White and New Zealand's Tim Finn (*Split Endz*, *Crowded House*) in Australia and called it ALT (Andy, Liam, Tim); put out a record and toured the world. He's done music for film (*Waking Ned Devine*), hosted TV shows on Irish culture, acted in movies (*Timbuktu*), and has been part of several projects linking the roots of country music to its Irish roots (*The Irish Gala*, PBS), sharing the stage with such luminaries as Emmylou Harris and Steve Earle. The respect within the international music community for Liam O Maonlai is enormous. As Colin Devlin (*The Devlins*) says simply, "Liam is a star."

"I've only ever wanted to be an entertainer – it's all I've wanted; to be up on the stage, connecting with people," Liam has said. To watch Liam perform, solo or as part of a group, is to watch someone who lives—no, who **is**—music. He glides from the pop tunes of the Flowers, to Bob Dylan, Burt Bacharach, to a sean nos Irish tune, to a traditional gospel sing-a-long, to ... whatever comes next in the inspiration of the now. The stage is his element, and as the elemental soul he is, he both gives nourishment to and is nourished by the music and the audience. Like a Pied Piper, that shamanistic Fool-figure from the children's tale, he explores and leads the way through an intimate, open and ultimately joyous experience in which the audience is an active, attentive participant in the creation of this magical moment in time. "There is a great facing of oneself – for me, I find I face myself every time I go on stage. Because there has to be a certain selflessness on the stage, for it to flow, for there to be purity. And sometimes it's really hard to find it, or hard to know that it's there – and you can't try, and you can't push it. It's got to be a sort of... letting go, and just enjoying it. And there's nothing better than that... there is an infinity in that moment. It keeps me awake – keeps my spirit awake."

"...I am inspired by much contemporary music, and I draw no huge distinction between any music when I perform alone. I see my solo stage as a story-telling place where I am at ease and I can form a relationship between myself and the house I perform in ... revealing the songs and sounds that have been like sunlight to me in life."

Come with Liam on his latest adventure. We may not know exactly where we're going, but the Journey's the thing...

US Contact: Karen Koski, 3graces media – 3graces@voyager.net ; 248.670.2560

Please also see: www.3gracesmedia.com for additional press/US tour information, and www.hothouseflowers.com for more information on Hothouse Flowers and Liam's European solo activities.