

## Brigid Power Ryce to launch debut EP with Róisín Dubh gig

BY KERNAN ANDREWS

THE INDIE film screenwriter Mary Case is well known for her phrase "No pressure, no diamonds." It's true. Sometimes you need a bit of pressure or stress to force you into action. One woman who can testify to this is Brigid Power Ryce.

Galway based singer-songwriter Brigid Power Ryce will mark the launch of her debut EP *You Are Here* with a gig upstairs in the Róisín Dubh on Tuesday at 8pm.

Brigid was born in London to Irish parents who moved back to Ireland when she was 12. In both locations there was always music in the house.

"My mum's side are really good singers and there was always music on, such a wide range of trad and rock from Mary Black to Jeff Buckley," Brigid tells me as we sit for the interview on a Thursday afternoon.

Initially Brigid was more interested in football than music. She was a keen supporter of Arsenal and spent much time converting the family to the Gunners' cause.

While they stuck to the Arsenal, Brigid, by her teens had drifted away from the beautiful game and found her attention being drawn more and more to music - particularly to the power and possibilities of singing.

"I only started singing when I was 17 when I heard Robert Plant, Jeff Buckley, and Aretha Franklin," she says. "I was fascinated by what they could do with their voices and they were the first that made me want to sing."

Brigid wanted to sing, but, by her own admission, "procrastinated" about actually making a start on getting gigs and developing a career. However one un-nerving aeroplane journey put things into perspective for her.

"I kept putting it off and procrastinating about it," she says. "Then one day I happened to be on a flight coming back from New York and the plane hit some very bad turbulence. Everything was going crazy, the stewardesses were screaming, things were falling off the overhead lockers, and people were becoming frightened. I didn't think the plane was going



Brigid Power Ryce. Pic:- Reg Gordon

to crash but it made me realise I have to start singing and stop putting it off. That experience got me moving."

Brigid played her first gig at an open mic night in London two years ago. Eventually she arrived in Galway and at the Róisín Dubh one night she met Keith Wallace, who runs the independent Galway label Rusted Rail. Impressed by her "captivating, hypnotic, and transcendental" music, he

encouraged her to record an EP. On February 1 (St Brigid's Day, appropriately) this year Rusted Rail released *You Are Here*.

The EP comes in a 3" format in a handmade sleeve and features five tracks. It was recorded in Philadelphia with American acoustic guitarist Eric Carbonara and in ToeRag studios in London. ToeRag is run by Liam Watson, the Grammy Award-winning British recording engineer best

known for engineering and mixing the White Stripes' 2003 album *Elephant*. How did she get to work with Watson?

"I emailed Liam - I might have been drunk at the time - and asked if I could record with him," Brigid says. "I sent him a song and he liked what he heard. He gave me a date and asked how many songs I had. I said I had only one and he told me to 'Come back to me when you have seven'. I had to come up with the rest quick."

Again, a pressurised situation helped produce artistic goods and Brigid's EP, featuring just her voice and guitar is a haunting, hypnotic experience, with 'Lost Night Girls' its stand out track.

Brigid's music is strongly folk influenced and owes an audible debt to the great Tim Buckley. However she has a discernible style of her own, where, over languid guitar strums, her large, strong voice muses, rises, and drifts, often becoming an instrument itself.

"I feel it suits to sing more like an instrument being played over the music," says Brigid, and she acknowledges the impact Tim Buckley has had on

her. "I first heard Tim Buckley when I was about 16/17 but I didn't get him at the time. When I heard him again when I was 19 everything he did just made sense to me. He doesn't sing in a restrained manner in any way and that's what I felt I was missing in my voice. Tim Buckley just cleared that for me."

Like David Bowie (particularly in his *Space Oddity* and *Hunky Dory* days) Brigid's weapon of choice is the 12-string guitar. "I just picked one up and I liked the sound," she says. "It has a much bigger sound than a six-string and on it a little can sound like a lot. The mistakes you can make while playing a 12-string actually sound 'nicer' than on a six-string. I like that you can get away with that."

Support on the night is from Rusted Rail label mates *Yawning Chasm* and *The Driftwood Manor*. *You Are Here* will be available on the night and through [www.rustedrail.com](http://www.rustedrail.com). See also [www.myspace.com/bpowerryce](http://www.myspace.com/bpowerryce)

## High voltage hoe-down with Hayseed Dixie

BY KERNAN ANDREWS

GET READY for a barn stormin', hell raisin', high falutin' hoe down when Hayseed Dixie bring their adrenaline fuelled bluegrass take on classic rock to Strange Brew in the Róisín Dubh.

Hayseed Dixie - John 'Barley Scotch' Wheeler (vocals/guitar/fiddle), Rev Don Wayne Reno (banjo/vocals), Deacon Dale Reno (mandolin/guitar/voca-



ls), and Jake 'Bakesnake' Byers (bass/vocals) - play *Strange Brew* on Thursday February 18 at 8pm.

Hayseed Dixie take the songs of their favourite band AC/DC (as well as songs by Queen, Kiss, Motörhead, Franz

Ferdinand, etc.) and re-do them as pure, down home, high hollerin' bluegrass. What's more - it works, because they are phenomenal musicians with a deep love for and understanding of American trad, folk, and bluegrass.

The band's leader and spokesman John Wheeler explained why when I interviewed him in 2004: "There are four things that make any decent folk song - drinkin', shootin', cheatin', and killin'. People say what about love? Well that's the cheatin' part and then there's the love of drink. There's a very long tradition in folk/Celtic music murder ballads and looking at the darker side of life.

"My dad loved hillbilly and outlaw country like Merle Haggard, but when I first heard AC/DC's *Highway To Hell* it didn't sound that different in terms of the melodies and chord structures. I was just learning to play guitar and was playing bluegrass and AC/DC and the songs were about the same things.

"It's that same 'Yeah I'm a blue-collar no good but I have a right to raise hell Bon Scott style on a Friday night.' It never seemed weird to us play rock'n'roll and bluegrass. The only difference is the dirty guitar and drums in rock."

Hayseed Dixie's bluegrass versions of 'Whole Lotta Rosie' and 'Ace Of Spades' make these slices of classic rock sound as if they were actually written by 19th century American folk musicians and not late 20th century Australians and Englishmen. It's music the heavy metallor and the bluegrass fanatic will not fail to enjoy.

Tickets are available from the Róisín Dubh and *Zhivago*.

## 'Exceptional' Congolese guitarist to play Galway



Niwel Tsumbu & Song Of The Nations.

BY KERNAN ANDREWS

CONGOLESE MUSICIAN Niwel Tsumbu and his band *Song Of The Nations* are coming to Galway to play two dates - Friday February 19 in the Róisín Dubh and Aras Eanna Arts Centre, Inis Oírr, Aran Islands, on Saturday 20.

The band are Niwel Tsumbu (guitar/vocals), Hungary's Peter Erdei (bass), Irishman Eamonn Cagney (percussion), Germany's Kathryn Doehner (violin), and Cuban Frailan Moran Mendive (percussion) and they have been causing a serious stir of late.

The *Irish Times* said: "Antidotes to the recession don't come much more potent than

this...Niwel takes his audience on a journey of discovery that traverses the peaks and troughs of life's unpredictable terrain with startling precision. He gives full rein to a sweep of syncopated rhythms that have many punters grasping and gasping to keep up."

Hot Press declared: "Tsumbu's guitar playing is nothing short of exceptional and the wall of sound that hits you once you press play is infectious. If you're one of the many unfortunate ones who can't afford a holiday this year, pick up *Song Of The Nations* and experience the world from the comfort of your armchair."

Since his arrival in Ireland from the Congo in '04, Niwel has

developed a reputation as an elegant and fluent guitarist, vocalist, and composer. His ability to vividly blend African rhythms, rumba, new jazz, and classical flamenco, has gained him ardent admirers all over Ireland.

His album *Song Of The Nations* is available to from iTunes, Emusic.com, and Amazon. See also [www.niweltsumbu.com](http://www.niweltsumbu.com) and [www.myspace.com/niweltsumbu](http://www.myspace.com/niweltsumbu)

The Róisín Dubh gig takes place upstairs at 8.30pm. Tickets are available from the Róisín Dubh and *Zhivago*. The Inis Oírr show starts at 8.30pm. For bookings contact 099 - 75150 or email [araseanna@eircom.net](mailto:araseanna@eircom.net)

# Bad to the Bone

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DJs: Kit Kola & Dave Barry

Valentine's Dance Party  
Saturday 13th February  
'Deeper Underground'  
at the CELLAR  
Eglinton Street  
Jumpin' Jive Rockabilly  
Swing 50's Rock n' Roll  
Original ska R&B Soul Surf n' Psych  
10.30 till late! Admission -  
€5 with concession  
Retro Dress-Up  
Optional!

Presented by **TUNIFORM** streetwear Deeper