

Music For Dead Birds to release debut mini-album

BY KERNAN ANDREWS

RUSTED RAIL, the independent Galway record label, will release *And Then It Rained For Seven Days* by Music For Dead Birds, the folk/alternative duo led by Irish-American songwriter Jimmy Monaghan.

Music For Dead Birds - Jimmy Monaghan (vocals/guitar) and Donal Walsh (drums) - will launch the eight track mini-album with a show upstairs in the Róisín Dubh on Tuesday April 14 at 9pm.

Twenty-one-year old Jimmy was born in Danbury, Connecticut, USA, and moved to Ireland with his family when he was six. However he has kept hold of his American accent.

"I grew up in Mayo and there weren't that many people to talk to who could influence my accent," Jimmy laughs as we sit for the interview on a Thursday afternoon. "I wasn't very sociable as a kid."

However a sound Jimmy grew up surrounded by was music. His father is an Ozzy Osbourne fan and had been a member of a Christian rock band. He also gave Jimmy his start on the guitar by teaching him some chords. His mother plays piano and enjoys the hard rock of Kansas and the gentle singer-songwriterisms of Jim Croce.

Eventually Jimmy began writing

songs and about two years ago, he and his friend Donal decided to form a band. Jimmy's sister Brianna also takes the drum seat from time to time.

Once the band was formed a name was needed. An encounter with an electrocuted duck provided the inspiration.

"We had recorded a song and we wanted to set up a Myspace page and put it up," says Jimmy. "We needed to go out and buy a microphone as we had to re-record the song before we could put it online. As we were going into town we saw this dead duck lying on a electrical cable outside Supermac's. I took a photo of it, put it on our Myspace page, and called it Dead Bird Music. Then it became Music For Dead Birds."

Since then Music For Dead Birds has regularly played the Róisín Dubh. Through those shows Jimmy has revealed himself to be a talented songwriter of real potential.

His songs are brief and his lyrics concise. "My attention span is not too good," he laughs. "I like something that grabs you and keeps you there from start to finish."

Yet through that brevity Jimmy communicates sharp character studies, humorous stories, rage and confusion, or attitudes from a streetwise young man to a heart on sleeve romantic. It's no surprise he

is an avid reader.

"I do like reading and I also dabble in writing other things besides lyrics," he says. "I like Ian Banks, John Irving, Saul Bellow. In poetry I like Emily Dickinson, but I'm also inspired by the lyrics I hear in other songwriters."

A sample of some of the songs Music For Dead Birds have performed (and a few they have never played live) can now be heard on *And Then It Rained For Seven Days*. "It's relieving," says Jimmy of the release. "It's nice to finally have something out there."

And Then It Rained For Seven Days is a strong opening statement from the band, and reveals some different sides to their sound. On stage they have a strongly 1960s folk-pop style, but the new mini-album plays much more like edgy indie/alternative acoustic rock, with some experimental flashes.

'17' has a quiet/loud/quiet dynamic that places it very much in the alternative camp. 'Four Years From Now' showcases the folk-pop side, while tracks like 'Pill, Oh' are more left of centre.

"Me and Donal like to experiment," says Jimmy. "It's good to push yourself into uncharted waters and see what happens."

The stand out track is "What Did You Expect?", with its brooding vocals and vaguely menacing riff.

This song, above all, is what gives the album its indie/alternative feel. "I wrote that song after I had not written anything for a while," says Jimmy. "I was really mad one day so I went upstairs and that just popped out."

The songs collected here are but a tiny portion of what the prolific Jimmy has written. "We just chose the ones we felt worked best together, that created a mood," he says.

Rusted Rail

And Then It Rained For Seven Days is the latest release from the Galway based independent label Rusted Rail, run by Keith Wallace.

Rusted Rail is home to acts like Agitated Radio Pilot, Cubs, The Declining Winter, Directorsound, Autumn Grieve, Loner Deluxe, Phantom Dog Beneath The Moon, So Cow, and United Bible Studies. The label celebrated its third birthday in March and *And Then It Rained For Seven Days* is its 15th release.

"I'm very happy to have Music For Dead Birds on board," Keith tells me. "I first saw them in Bell, Book, and Candle in 2007. It was their third gig. They were doing something different from any other band I was into and I knew that day I wanted to work with them."

Like other RR releases, *And Then It Rained For Seven Days* comes on

a 3" CD, housed in a handmade gatefold sleeve. Despite this being the era of 'the download is king' Rusted Rail displays a stubborn, determined, commitment to the physical release.

"The aim of the label has always been to channel music out into the world in a format that is an artefact," says Keith. "I understand the ease of MP3s but Rusted Rail will never release through downloads only."

"For people who want to consume music MP3s are fine, but for people who love music, they want to hold something in their hands. Music lovers love the history and the artefact of the album, the process that went into making it."

"That is why there has been a resurgence in vinyl and collectability - music lovers will always want that. As is said, you can roll a cigarette on a jazz LP but you can't on an MP3."

It is also why most Rusted Rail releases come on a 3" CD format.

"People say they are cute and they like to collect them," says Keith. "I'm also hoping to expand the way Rusted Rail releases music by bringing items out on vinyl as well."

Support for the Music For Dead Birds gig comes from Phantom Dog Beneath The Moon. Tickets are available from the Róisín Dubh and Zhivago.

