

GUIDE

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"They needed a Mr Nasty and I probably gave them the tools for that"



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THE VOICE
BATTLE OF THE COACHES
UP CLOSE & PERSONAL
WITH DOLORES & KIAN

INTERVIEW

WATCH IT! *The Voice of Ireland*, Sunday, RTE One



Let battle commence!

As things heat up on *The Voice of Ireland*, we all want to know who will reign supreme in the coaches' seat. **Janice Butler** chats to Dolores O'Riordan, Kian Egan, Jamelia and Bressie, about the drama ahead

When Dolores O'Riordan was 18, a girl at school in Limerick told her about three boys in a band looking for a singer. She met them, they called themselves The Cranberries and, within a week, they had written their first song together, *Linger*. Barely a year later, it reached the US Top Ten and the rest is history. While she has

been working on solo projects for the last number of years, her profile has been quite low-key, but that's all changed as she makes her presence felt as the new coach on *The Voice of Ireland*. The Cranberries frontwoman is stamping her authority on the show after replacing Sharon Corr on this year's panel. With The Cranberries, she had No.1 singles in 26 countries and sold more than 40 million albums worldwide and, as we saw in the first two blind

auditions, she's not going to let her fellow coaches forget that! In person, she's as eccentric as you imagine she might be. Dressed head to toe in black, she has kept her strong Limerick accent, undiluted by years spent away from her native city. She confesses that she didn't know what *The Voice* was about when approached to join it. "I did it because my 16-year-old suggested it. I don't really watch TV, so I had no idea what I was doing and he

had to explain the show to me and the concept of the turning chair. All I was worried about was 'what if I've got to the toilet; could I sit in a chair for that long?'" So has *The Voice of Ireland* enticed her to delve into more TV work in the future? "I find the whole TV or film thing very long and time-consuming. It's fun when you're doing it but there's a lot of waiting around. I'm working on my music too at the moment. I've about 15 new tracks done and I'm probably going to head over to Los Angeles this month and see what's on offer."

"Well, the show is called *The Voice*, so during the auditions I tended to analyse the vocal. I didn't really pay



Dolores O'Riordan

"I'm a typical tomboy, so of course I'm having the craic with the lads; they're great"

any attention to what the song was. If they had a diaphragm problem or vocal cord problem, I could tell them that, be more specific and give them professional advice. I'm here to give people advice, I'm not involved in what happens to them afterwards, but this is a great platform and stepping stone for these artists and who knows what can happen from this show? It's a great opportunity for them."

Perhaps it's all those years of gigging with the boys in the band, but Dolores admits that she's bonded most with Bressie and Kian on the show. "I'm a typical tom-boy, so of course I'm having the craic with the lads; they're great." She says she hasn't had to fight for acts yet. "There were a couple of occasions in the Blinds when all four of the coaches turned around but thankfully every time I turned, the act came to me. I didn't have to fight for anyone."

So has *The Voice of Ireland* enticed her to delve into more TV work in the future? "I find the whole TV or film thing very long and time-consuming. It's fun when you're doing it but there's a lot of waiting around. I'm working on my music too at the moment. I've about 15 new tracks done and I'm probably going to head over to Los Angeles this month and see what's on offer."

His stint in the Australian wilds has had a huge impact on former Westlife singer Kian

Egan. Not only did he take home the title of King of the Jungle, but it's transformed people's opinion of the Sligo native. On *The Voice of Ireland*, Kian was often portrayed as Mister Nasty, arguing with fellow coach Bressie at every turn and generally coming off as a spoilt child. Now he's the nicest guy on TV and fully aware of the change in public opinion. "It's funny because everyone has been saying that I came across as a different person in the jungle than I do when I'm on *The Voice*, and I was surprised by that. But I guess what I'm doing on *The Voice* is judging people and giving them advice, so naturally it would come across differently."

"I think in year one of *The Voice* I got edited very unfairly because they needed a Mister Nasty and I probably gave them the tools for that. The first few years there was that power struggle thing going on, especially between myself and Bressie, but that's all disappeared now."

Kian, who looks a little thinner and a lot more sun-kissed from his time Down Under, is still shocked that he took the top prize but believes it all came down to just being himself. "The whole thing for me was the experience of it, just to go in and see what the whole thing's about. I'd watched the show for years and always enjoyed it so I just wanted to give it a go and I thought as long as

I don't come out first I'll be happy. Day by day, when Ant and Dec are coming in to tell you who's going home, you're expecting it's going to be you and when it didn't happen, I just went through the same process right up until the final – it was a shocker."

"I just tried to forget that it was a TV show and relax and be natural, and that was the only way I felt I could be in there."

"I'm doing a few things in the UK over the next few weeks but they're just small TV appearances. In terms of proper job offers, there's been an awful lot that's come through my agent and I'm really taken back by it all"

With TV offers from the UK flooding in, it looks like Kian's ambition to make TV a permanent career could be coming true sooner than he thought. "It's been insane, but I'm trying my hardest not to pay too much attention to it", he reveals excitedly. "I'm doing a few things in the UK over the next few weeks but they're just small TV appearances. In terms of proper job offers, there's been an awful lot that's come through my agent and I'm really taken back by it all. TV is always where I've wanted to go with my career and it seems like the opportunity could be coming my way, but it's going to be difficult to make the right choice."

For now, he's focusing his attention on his role on *The Voice of Ireland* and while his fellow Westlife bandmates continue their solo endeavours, don't expect anything similar from him in the future. "You'd have to ask Louis Walsh about that! A few offers have come in regarding an album but I just don't know. Music has always been such a big passion in my life but the industry has become so serious and tough that I don't know if I want to go down that road. If I do it I want it to be fun, I don't want to be pulled apart; not after the success of recent times."



Kian Egan

Q&A with Jamelia and Bressie



Jamelia

She won last season's *The Voice of Ireland* with her act, Keith Hanley, and was embroiled in a number of on-air spats with Sharon Corr, so we're excited to see if her fiery approach continues this season.

"She's mad as a box of frogs but she's brilliant, I love having her on the panel"

Jamelia on Dolores O'Riordan

Are you more confident on this year's *The Voice of Ireland*?
Yes definitely. Last year, I felt I had something to prove. I was the new girl and I was nervous but now I feel

more confident in my role, especially because I helped Keith win last year. I plan on taking it as seriously as last year but I think I'll have a bit more fun this time around.

Are you hoping to win again?
I don't look at it that way – we don't win as coaches, it's all dependent on the talent and believing in your talent. If Keith had been on another person's team I still would have thought he should win. People might prefer if I was more competitive but I just love being a part of the process and instilling confidence in people and being a coach. I do genuinely believe I have more potential winners on my team this year than I had last year.

How do you find the commute between the UK and Ireland?
I have two daughters and they still go to school over in Birmingham. When we do the live shows they're at the weekend so it's not that bad, but saying that, it's tiring and I'm a single mum, so if I didn't love the show as much as I do, I wouldn't be doing it.

Have you kept in touch with Keith Hanley?
You know what? I haven't and the reason I haven't is because I was very annoyed that I wasn't allowed to be a part of his creative journey as an artist. They didn't want me involved in his work as a recording artist, so I thought it was better to separate myself from him completely, which has been horrible. I wanted to write songs with him and help him with his album and I was more than willing to come over here and do that. I definitely found that really frustrating and was angry about it but I guess you just have to trust that the recording company knows what it's doing.

How are you getting on with Dolores O'Riordan?
She's mad as a box of frogs but she's brilliant; I love having her on the panel. She's one of those people who doesn't realise how hilarious she is. She's such a character and she brings a whole new dynamic to the show. She's a true rock chick. I'm sure you'd prefer if I said I hated her guts but I love her to bits!

Bressie

The Mullingar rocker and triathlete won the first series with Pat Byrne and came fourth last year with Shannon Murphy.

"I'd love to sing with her, do a duet or something, but to put Jamelia with Dolores and me is going to be a tough one for our musical director"

Were you surprised that Kian won *I'm a Celebrity*?
I always said he would do well. We have a go at each other on the show but I know what he's really like and he was definitely the worthy winner. Over the last two years, we've become a lot closer. I think being King of the Jungle will help him when it comes to the live shows.

There's been a lot of changes since the show started, but are you still happy to be on *The Voice of Ireland*?
I wouldn't be here if I wasn't enjoying it and I've always had that attitude whether it was sport or music. The one thing with this show is that it's always progressing and that keeps things interesting.



Bressie