

# Super debut that could bring Choice Prize success

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THE Limerick based trio, Rusangano Family, has arguably released the most vital, essential Irish album of the year.

Deserved praise has been heaped on the hip-hop trio for the electric and powerful *Let The Dead Bury The Dead*, bursting with samples from the inner reaches of producer MynameisjOhn's mind and the insightful, socially engaged lyrics of vocalists God Knows Jonas and MuRLI.

The album is a shoo-in for a Choice nod and may even break Limerick's duck in winning the Irish Mercury equivalent, we believe. The trio mark the album's release with a hometown show in Dolan's this Friday night and have just returned from music showcase festival SXSW in Austin, Texas, where they went down a storm.

MynameisjOhn - alter ego of Clare man John Lillis, who plies his trade in Limerick - Zimbabwean born, Shannon raised, Limerick identifying rapper God Knows Jonas and vocalist MuRLI - based in Limerick, but of Togolese descent - formed Rusangano Family in 2015 but have been collaborating for a number of years on individual projects.

*Let The Dead Bury The Dead* is their debut. Initially a duo of John and God Knows, before in-



A Family affair: MynameisjOhn - alter ego of Clare man John Lillis - with God Knows Jonas and MuRLI, who have released the superb *Let The Dead Bury The Dead*. See [www.breakingtunes.com/rusanganofamily](http://www.breakingtunes.com/rusanganofamily)

corporating MuRLI and creating a cohesive trio, they have rightly drawn plaudits for a powerful offering that views modern Ireland through their own quite unique viewpoint.

All three boast strong connections to Music Generation Limerick and this an album that draws heavily on the places and sounds that have influenced each of them in turn, from their places of birth to where they have grown up, live in and work,

latterly this city.

From the dancehall beat of Kierkegaard - name checking Snoop Dogg and Ed Sheeran, whom the trio have encountered during their short existence - to the gentle jazz swing of Blabber Mouth, the trip hop of Lights On - the album's stand out moment - the African beat, deep bass throb and xylophone twinkling *Love In A Time of War*, this is a deeply eclectic album, and that is merely the opening four tracks.

On the retro, gospel feel of *Wisdom Teeth*, the duo rap: "I never met a true racist, but on a daily basis I shrink from their existence", name checking the Daily Mail, Facebook and Donald Trump as subjects for ire, while the immigration lines at Heathrow on the malevolent track of the same name are referenced in the album's darkest point, which shreds the oft easy conclusions drawn on the subject of asylum seekers.

But yet, for all the references to the outside world, the album is one that sees expressions of self-doubt and fears of a wasted youth at its most powerful moments.

God Knows has been a powerful advocate for Limerick, appearing at the recent 2020 bid presentation to the Eurocrats in Dublin with Kathleen Turner, with whom he collaborated on the 2014 City of Culture project, the Pigtown Fling, in that project's standout moment. As such, the trio are a product both of their place and a love of world music, driven by Lillis, whose own 2012 offering, *The Thinker and The Prover*, was an astonishing mish-mash of samples and progressive, eye-opening music.

The "organic relationship" between them - God Knows told this newspaper that he and Lillis had "started performing together before we actually had music, so he already had that back catalogue and I had tons of lyrics" - is the key, while the addition of MuRLI - "an amazing lyricist, an all round product," - has driven them to dizzying new heights.

The outside world is sitting up and taking notice, with Rusangano Family preparing for a big festival summer and the plaudits deservedly flowing their way. In the meantime, they play Dolan's this Friday, with support from Shookrah and DJ Peter Curtin.

## CHRIS' CORNER



Art reviews and news from Chris Hayes, champion of Limerick's bid to be European Capital of Culture

### EVA a real feast for fans of contemporary art at its best

Throughout the opening launch of EVA there was an air of excitement. Each venue was launched at different times, beginning early in the morning with a talk by the curator Koyo Kouoh at the Belltable and continuing until late at night with DJing by Pádraic E. Moore in the Milk Market.

The exhibition is so vast that the time and energy required to traverse its many manifestations throughout the city is intense. It's a stretch, to say the least, to attempt it in one day. I've been a long-time advocate that biennial guides should come with health warnings - watch out for art legs; exposure to culture may result in exhaustion, eye strain, and back ache. Hopefully, a good time too.

Typically, the response to such a large scale exhibition by the critics is to select a few key highlights. Already a few artworks have come up in almost every conversation I've had, such as Michael Joo in *Sailor's Home*, or Alfredo Jaar's eerie cloud installation at Cleeves the former condensed milk factory.

Highlights provide a necessary slimming down of the healthy menu on offer. Yet, as someone who's living in the city I'm looking forward to taking my time, to repeated viewings and really getting stuck in. The biennial continues until 17 July. Plenty of time to digest.

Perhaps if I'm pushed for a highlight from the launch I'll begin at the end. As the night came to a close, it was in the conversations about people's experiences so far - what they had seen and what they hoped to see - that it really felt alive to me. EVA has an unusual history as a biennial, the effects of which can be felt today.

Beginning in January of 1977, it was established by artists as an annual exhibition to help raise exposure for the arts to the general public. Today, it provides a major international profile for art and artists, and happens once every two years. While the scale and ambitions of EVA have certainly developed over time, when I spoke to the artists involved they spoke about how genuine the experience had been, how open and earnest the people are, how clear the integrity at the heart of it was and how remarkable this contrasts with other biennials worldwide.

EVA launched on Friday 15 April, and at Ormston House we launched our project, *Murder Machine*, the day afterwards.

I have to admit it's been a tiring week, with late nights to install the artworks and precious few moments not spent answering emails and worrying about the next steps to take till the opening day. Organising an exhibition is a lot like planning a birthday party, there's nothing more terrifying than the thought that no one will arrive.

The finale of for the launch at Ormston House was a performance by Ceara Conway, which was produced by DJ Deviant. The performance was a dramatic reinterpretation of *Roisin Dubh*, the symbolic poem marking the end of Gaelic Ireland.

The audience was blindfolded, making Conway's traditional Irish singing and Deviant's at times eerie electronic music come together in a strange way. Other performers were covertly situ-

# Society takes aim at Annie Get Your Gun

LIMERICK Musical Society is back with its annual Spring production this April, taking aim at the classic musical *Annie Get Your Gun*.

the *Mornin'* and *Anything You Can Do*.

A superb line up of local talent has been assembled including

Limerick Musical Society