

Declan O'Rourke



Overview

O'Rourke has been crafting songs since his mid-teens, his attention snagged from the age of 13 when he was given a guitar by a priest whilst living in Australia. By 24, long returned to Ireland, he found himself at the centre of the fiercely creative Dublin music scene that proved a fertile breeding ground for the young artist and his contemporaries.

Performing extensively since across the USA, Europe and Australia, Declan O'Rourke's growing status is one of a significant global artist. He has released seven studio records to date, five of which have enjoyed top five status in the national charts of his native Ireland.

Arrivals (April 2021), reached Number 2 in Ireland and was nominated for International Album of the Year by the Americana Music Association, UK.

Upon publication of his literary debut, **The Pawnbroker's Reward** (Nov 2021), reached number 2 in the Hardback Fiction bestseller's chart and stayed in the top five for 7 weeks.

"My goal is to take something that has moved me and paint it into a kind of poetic vehicle with instructions for its listener to have the same profound result."

Works

Ever since the release of his 2004 debut, **Since Kyabram**, the success of which secured him a major record deal with the UK based label V2, the Galway-based artist has been praised by songwriting giants and media figures such as John Prine, Edith Bowman, and Paul Weller. His work, meanwhile, has been covered by an array of world-class artists, including Christy Moore, Camille O'Sullivan, Josh Groban, and Eddi Reader.

His 2007 follow-up, **Big Bad Beautiful World**, effortlessly confirmed his appeal in Ireland as well as with an increasing list of inspired advocates. Since then, O'Rourke's following

has grown the world over. He has performed extensively across Ireland, the US, Australia, the UK, and has toured in Scotland, France, Wales, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Holland, New Zealand, India, and Iceland.

With his third album, **Mag Pai Zai** (2011), O'Rourke received media attention in America through coverage in Spin, American Songwriter, Wall Street Journal, NPR's World Café and USA Today. In early 2014, an appearance on Mountain Stage aired on over 300 NPR affiliates achieving bringing an unprecedented level of exposure to his work.

Ever willing to experiment with his creative output, between October 2014 and September 2015, O'Rourke released **Howlin' Lowly Moons**, a new song every month, made freely available to his mailing list subscribers as well as to followers on his various social media platforms. In December 2015, his fourth studio album, **Gold Bars in the Sun**, contained a selection of these songs and included a number of collaborations, most notably '**Let's Make Big Love**,' a duet with friend, John Prine, the songwriter's songwriter.

In October 2016 O'Rourke released **In Full Colour**, a collaboration with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra that presented new material alongside selections from his back catalogue. The work was largely orchestrated by O'Rourke himself across a series of concerts spanning ten years. "It transports you to another world." - Hot Press "

2017 saw the release his sixth album, **Chronicles of the Great Irish Famine**, a passion project researched over a 17 year period and written around the most sombre and tragic series of events in Irish history. As well as praise from the critics, the album caught the positive attention of prominent academic scholars and won many shining reviews, a BBC folk award nomination and the 2018 RTÉ Folk award for best original song.

Recorded in 2019, but not released until April of 2021 O'Rourke's latest album, **Arrivals**, was produced by no less a luminary than Paul Weller, a long time supporter who said of working with Declan, "He brings such modernity and timelessness to his words and music that is far, far reaching. Beyond limiting categories."

What's next for this intuitive songwriter, whose expressive work gently catches the light in many different ways? We shall have to wait and see: He has said he does not like to walk the same path over and over again. A deeper truth is that while artists need to secure themselves to their own identity, they also have to explore outside it.

"If you had a palette of different colours as a painter," says O'Rourke, "why would you limit yourself to red and white?"

RECENT AWARDS AND NOMINATIONS

- *Arrivals* - nominated International Album of The Year AMA UK, Americana awards, 2021.
- *The Stars Over Kinvara* - nominated for International Song of The Year by Australia's Double J Radio, Tower of Song awards, 2021.
- *Along The western Seaboard* - Winner of Best Original Song at the 2018 RTÉ Radio 1 Folk Awards, (from '*Chronicles Of The Great Irish Famine*').
- *The Great Saint Lawrence River* - nominated for Best Original Song, BBC Radio 2 Folk awards, 2018, (from '*Chronicles Of The Great Irish Famine*').
- Nominated for Best Singer at the 2018 RTÉ Radio 1 Folk Awards.

NOTEWORTHY PERFORMANCES

- In April 2013, sold out a 7-night residency at New York City's Irish Arts Center. A huge success, the residency was raved about by the New York Times chief popular music critic, Jon Pareles.
- Declan performed as a featured artist in front of a 70,000+ crowd at Merlefest USA (2017) as part of the Transatlantic Sessions USA tour, and featured on Season Five of the BBC's Transatlantic Sessions series (2011) alongside Alison Krauss and Amos Lee.
- A sold-out performance 'The Basement' music venue, Sydney, has been broadcast repeatedly on Australia's ABC TV network.

- At a 2013 Oscars event, performed at the Oscar Wilde Awards in Los Angeles for Hollywood royalty figures, including film directors Steven Spielberg and J. J. Abrams.
- Has collaborated with or performed alongside: James Taylor, Alison Krauss, Rosanne Cash, Maura O'Connell, John Prine, Paul Weller, Jerry Douglas, Paul Brady, The Dubliners, The Chieftans, Planxty, Paul Muldoon, The Cardigans, Midnight Oil, Paul Kelly, Glen Hansard, Peggy Seeger, Neil and Calum MacColl, Bic Runga, Eliza and Martin Carthy, Laura Marling, Divine Comedy, Badly Drawn Boy, Snow Patrol, The Mavericks, Paulo Nutini, John Paul White, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Teddy Thompson, Damian Dempsey, Rodrigo y Gabriella, and many more.

PRAISE FOR DECLAN

- **Paul Weller**, of The Jam: "He writes the sort of classic songs that people don't write anymore, songs that sound like they've been around forever [...] Listen to Galileo, which is possibly the greatest song written in the last 30 years."
- **John Prine**, Grammy award winning artist: "Declan O'Rourke is a great songwriter. He is a fine fellow too and I believe the missing link to the Inkspots."
- **Glen Hansard**, Oscar-winning singer-songwriter: "Declan O'Rourke is one of the rare breed, he arrived fully formed. His songs and delivery belie his age, and ours. He is a timeless troubadour with a voice that breaks through all your defenses and gets to the heart of the matter. One of the true greats of our island."
- **Maura O'Connell**, Grammy-Award nominated singer: "He is a phenomenal writer, singer, musician and entertainer. I can't do justice to his talent in words. I don't say that very often, but in this case it is true."
- **Brendan Graham**, songwriter: "To me, Declan is not a songwriter within the ordinary definition of the word. He is a sorcerer of songs, with a Dickensian skill for finding the moment that details some aspect of our humanity."
- **Eddi Reader** - Declan O'Rourke is one of the best songwriters on the planet.
- "A songwriting giant." — **Joseph O'Connor**, writer, playwright, journalist.

REVIEWS

- "Compassion, romance, a sense of mortality, and a sense of history run through the songs . . . his calling is as a balladeer, proffering reassurance in the face of inevitable sorrow." — **Jon Pareles, New York Times**.
- **Mark Radcliffe**, BBC Radio: "Declan O'Rourke is an Irish songwriter well into his career and maturing quietly into one of the most significant Irish singers and writers of his generation."
- "Elements of folk . . . colored with subtle, finger-picked acoustic guitar and O'Rourke's warm, enveloping voice." — **The Wall Street Journal**
- "It's the storytelling and melodic felicity of his songs that really mark him out." — **Uncut Magazine**
- "A penchant for writing about love and history with equal amounts of ease and gravity." — **NPR World Café**
- "A songwriter whose appeal is distinctively wider than the standard three-minute pop wonder." — **The Irish Times**
- "A compelling vocal range and brilliantly individual songwriting." — **The Scotsman**
- "In a world clad with shortening attention-spans and a seemingly never-ending onslaught of over-stimulation, Declan O'Rourke and his intimate, contemplative music brilliantly stands out." — **American Songwriter**
- "O'Rourke is a masterful lyricist and staggering guitarist" — **Mojo**
- "Empathy and melody in abundance. Incredible storytelling. Declan's ability to emotionally blindside you with a flash of beautifully observed detail is incredible. He's the Irish John Prine." — **Pete Paphides** - Writer, journalist & broadcaster.