

Entertainment

Homecoming concerts a rarity for well-travelled Kieran Goss

Dromore West singer's first Sligo concert in four years takes place Sunday March 2

By Robert Cullen

Had this been February 18 of any of the previous three years, my interview with Kieran Goss would have been conducted over the phone rather than face-to-face.

The County Down native who now calls West Sligo his home is not normally in the country at this time of year.

Instead he could be anywhere from Canada to New Zealand, performing in front of an army of appreciative fans whom he has courted over a career spanning more than a quarter of a century.

So why is he sitting across the desk from me now? Well this time, the tour is on home soil, a fourteen-date nationwide tour which began Cork on January 31 and rolls into the Hawk's Well Theatre in Sligo town on Sunday, March 2.

To put into context how rare his Irish performances are, Kieran last undertook a nationwide tour of this scale seven years ago. His last Sligo show was a one-off homecoming concert four years ago.

It's been a while since Irish fans have had a chance to experience Kieran's live show and, given how international his touring schedule has become, it may be quite some time before you experience it again (see panel for ticket details).

Kieran will be joined on stage by his wife, Ann, a talented singer in her own right. The couple have found a happy balance between life in rural Sligo and life on the road.

"We've been living in Dromore West for the last 15 years, but really what we've been doing is going off and working in Germany, Switzerland, Holland, the UK a lot in the last number of years, Canada and then every two years out to Australia and New Zealand," Kieran tells me.

"Really, when we were back home, gigging was the last things on our minds. We used our time at home to go walking, do some gardening, go out swimming over at Aughris. A lot of people don't even realise I live here because we're around for a few months in the summer and then off again."

This time is different, and for that Kieran can thank promoters MCD. They contacted him last October and asked if he would pencil in one or two Irish shows. When these sold out, Kieran decided the time was right for a larger-scale tour.

"The [sold out] concerts gave us a little wake up call. Ann and I were sitting at home going 'You know, we haven't actually toured Ireland in seven or eight years. Maybe it's time that we did.'

"We seemed to have turned some corner in Ireland. I don't think this [tour] would have worked three years ago. People are saying now, 'F**k it, I'm going out,'" said Kieran, smiling.

In his tour poster, Kieran's cheeky grin stands out. His live shows are full of humour, wit and also full of explanation and emotion.

"Songs are at the centre of my



TRAVELLING MAN: Kieran Goss' first nationwide tour in seven years will see him come to the Hawk's Well in Sligo on Sunday, March 2 at 8pm. Tickets are on sale now or see panel for your chance to win some through the Sligo Weekender.

show. Songs are what it's really about, but it's also more than that. There's stories and entertainment. There's craic. It's a good night out, not a heavy night out. I'm looking forward to it.

"It's the first time in four or five years to be in Sligo. It will be a little bit difficult to play in front of the home audience. For me it's

easier to play in front of strangers, but when you look down and see neighbours and people you know it's always trickier.

"On the other hand, that makes it kind of special as well."

There isn't a new album corresponding with this tour, but Kieran will be drawing on one or two new songs, alongside his polished back

catalogue of hits such as "Out Of My Head", "Brand New Star", "Reasons For Leaving" and "Clear Day".

With eight studio albums under his belt, Kieran has a wealth of music in his archive that few live performers can match, yet he is not in any way jaded or scornful about the path it has taken him.

Ticket giveaway

KIERAN Goss will be performing in the Hawk's Well Theatre, Sligo on Sunday, March 2 at 8pm. Tickets cost €20 and can be booked through the theatre box office on 071-9161518 or online at www.hawkswell.com

Kieran has generously given us two pairs of tickets to his show which we will be giving away via our facebook page (www.facebook.com/sligoweekender) today, Thursday, and next Monday.

Don't forget to like Kieran's Facebook page too (www.facebook.com/kierangoss).

"The music business could make you cynical, if you decided to do that, but we [Kieran and his wife] don't," said the 51-year-old.

"We've opted to 'live the dream'. We have chosen to live a certain way that puts music and touring and art and poetry and a sense of freedom at the centre of our lives.

"We don't ignore the responsibilities – someone has to do the shopping – but that is not what our lives are about. It's about Ann and I going out in the world and believing in what we do and that it makes a difference.

"It might not be on a daily basis, but if a song just touches someone, in any way, then you've done your job as an artist."

And how Kieran's songs touch his fans is not something they're shy in telling him, particularly through his Facebook page which he actively and enthusiastically maintains himself.

"You have to be careful it [Facebook] doesn't take over your life, but I tell you one thing I think it's great for, that's feedback.

"I love the way people can communicate to me. I think Facebook is great because, even after a show, you get back to your hotel room and you could have 20 people contacting you saying it was a great show.

"And you have to take it on the chin sometimes, people don't always like you, but that's okay.

"I love feedback and to know that the song you wrote 15 years ago means something in people's lives."

He concludes: "The magic of any performance is in making people forget the distance [between performer and audience] and in making them think 'That's my song.' For me, I've achieved that by honing in on personal details and those personal details are universal.

"I don't try to second guess what's going on in people's lives. I write about what's going on in my life and I trust that I'm just an ordinary human being and a normal person and if something's breaking my heart or something's really pissing me off, then that's probably affecting a lot of people."