

'Small changes lead to the big picture.'
— Mary Flanagan

'With God, all things are possible.'
— Sister Stanislaus Kennedy

'Be thankful for what you have.'
— Dr Steve Collins

GAY BYRNE

We'll never see another TV star who changed the country the way he did



David Conachy

THE Daddy. There will never be another one like him. It is sometimes said that the reason there was only one Gay is because he was a product of a time of huge change, and there were still taboos to be broken and battles to be fought. But I bet Gay would make just the same impact if he was starting out now. Gay was as comfortable with comedians as with politicians, and he had an amazing range and an instinct for what was going on. And on top of that passionate, engaged mind he was a great performer with perfect comic and dramatic timing. As he is getting older and crankier, and caring less all the time what people think of him, he is getting even more interesting. The revisionists now say that Gay didn't really change the country, that he just surfed a wave. But Gay and the teams who worked with him did change the country, and it is doubtful we will ever see another TV show that will do that. Pity.



Brian Farrell

PAT McCABE

His rock 'n' roll view of Ireland made us re-evaluate our culture

IF WE learnt anything in the last few years, it is that we're terrible people for shrugging off the past without really dealing with it, and moving on to a new incarnation. When I was younger, it was all about rejecting everything to do with Irish culture and embracing a cool future. And then Pat McCabe came along and married traditional Ireland with rock 'n' roll. I think he taught us that there was a lot to be valued about our past, that you didn't always have to throw out the baby with the bathwater. He also exposed those dark places in the Irish psyche, that point where our neuroses calcify into psychosis. He was like a therapist for us, clearing out the clutter and reconciling us with our past. Recently, he has been having a stab at making sense of the last decade. Or making nonsense of it.

PAT KENNY

Master of forensic detail can add serious note to national debate on our future

THERE are other broadcasters you could include here. Marian Finucane is a hugely intelligent and generally very wise voice with an innate sense of right and wrong and how the country is feeling. Miriam O'Callaghan continues to grow and mature as a force who brings controlled emotion and righteousness to things when appropriate, while blowing cold and clear when she needs to. But second winds don't come with more gale force than Kenny's *Frontline*. Who knew that when he left the *Late Late* — after what critics never accepted was a hugely successful 10 years — he would take a large chunk of the national conversation with him? Another guy who gets a load of grief and very little thanks (apart from the money, obviously). In an age of bullshitters and people with opinions and axes to grind, Kenny's forensic nature and his constant return to the facts is to be cherished. There is going to be a lot to talk about over the next few years, and no better man than Kenny to moderate it. In a time of lightweights and wannabes, when getting into presenting is seen by girls from PR courses as a way to become celebs, Kenny is a serious person. And he also knows that while one should generally be polite, sometimes, just sometimes, you don't take crap from your guests.



Tony Gavin

ROY KEANE

Cranky Corkonian anger and energy the country needs



David Conachy

WHETHER you agree or disagree with him, he shows us that the crankiness of a Corkman is a force of nature, and if this country could harness it more effectively it could do more for the economy than all the windfarms you could build. John Lydon was probably talking about Cork people when he sang that anger is an energy. And Keane brings that important Cork touch of humour too, so you're never quite sure when he is taking the piss or not.



Tony Gavin

U2

They changed national soundtrack and put it on world stage

FOR some of us, U2 is *the* Irish story of the last few decades. It encompasses Irish charm, conartistry, capitalism, begrudgery, art and politics. Before politicians wondered if we were closer to Boston or Berlin, Bono was cosying up to both. *The Joshua Tree* and the underrated *Rattle and Hum* were the greatest love poems to the romantic ideal of America since *On The Road*. Then they went to Berlin and showed how Irish melancholy and edge were in tune with a darker, complicated, sexy European aesthetic too. Another double act of the populist album — *Achtung Baby* — and then the underrated, throwaway *Zooropa*. They taught us too that Irish guys were cool enough to hang with supermodels, that it's not a crime to have a business head on you, that Christians can be cool, and Larry Mullen taught us that Irish guys can look like matinee idols too. They exemplified how Irish people's natural exuberance can lead to huge embarrassments sometimes, but that we can't let that dim our light. Due to their time of life and the state of the music industry they are now at an uncertain place — how many rockers have stayed relevant into their 50s? But Bono won't give up, and that ambition is inspiring. I'd like to think that their new album is going to blow everyone's minds, and hopefully they will go back to more of the songs they did with Rick Rubin. Bono has talked a lot recently about their music as a delivery mechanism for joy, and we certainly need more joy. And ultimately, all distractions aside, U2's story is one of music, the best rhythm section in the world, a unique guitarist and the best white soul singer in the world. Some days, I put on some music and dance with my toddler. She has eclectic tastes — ranging from *Bends*-era Radiohead to dub reggae. Yesterday, I was clearing out the DVD drawer and I came across a DVD of U2 in Milan. I put on *Original of the Species* and first we danced a bit and then she just stopped and stared transfixed for the rest of the song. "I love that man singing," she said, "I love all the men singing. That's my favourite song." There's got to be something beautiful there, if even a two-year-old gets it.