

## THE PEOPLE WHO INSPIRED:



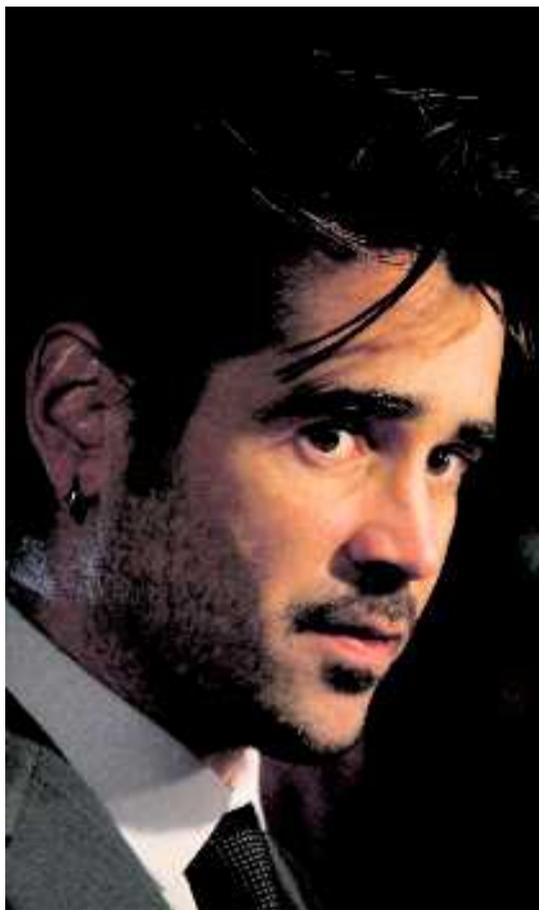
### BRENDAN O'CONNOR

I SUPPOSE this list is a bit eclectic, but for me, these are some of the people who provide the intangibles we need now — the mood music if you will. What's missing now is a bit of a buzz, and these are people who have a good energy about them. What do we need now? We need to remember who we are; we need to remember to be good to each other; we need to remember that you can still have joy in your life even when everything seems to be going against you; we need to remember our sense of humour; we need to remember that broken hearts and broken spirits don't last forever.

## COLIN FARRELL

When he took Hollywood, he did it for all of us

WHEN Colin Farrell "dated" Britney Spears, Dara O Briain said that he was doing it for all of us. It was a new space for Irish men. We were no longer just sexy in a soulful way, we could be straight-up mainstream handsome too, and date pop stars. There is something very attractive, too, about people who conquer their demons and Farrell has conquered very Irish demons. As with Britney, when Colin drank and drugged, he drank for Ireland, and when he hated himself he did it for Ireland. And now, he keeps his Irish darkness at bay and seems to manage to take a day at a time. His special-needs son seems to have brought a new passion and maturity and empathy to the charity work he was always a sucker for. Farrell has seen the worst the world can throw at a person, and he retains his positivity and humour. He also showed us in *Intermission* and *In Bruges* that little Irish movies can stand there with the best of them. And given some of his early acting, you would have to say that his work now is testament to the fact that you can turn around even the direst situation.



## SINEAD O'CONNOR

Fearless fighter, and a comforter to people who didn't even know her

AH, Sinead. An inspiration and a friend and comforter to millions of people who don't even know her. A bottomless pit of generosity and concern for others, a fearless fighter against injustice who tried to tell us for years about the awful scars a culture of abuse had left, and was leaving, on young Irish people. We grew up with Sinead, and she with us. Her ups and downs were ours. And they never dimmed that great spirit of archetypal Irish womanhood that burns in her — nurturer, fighter, but most importantly fearless. And also immune to the charms of careerism.

## EOGHAN HARRIS

Free-thinking confronter of consensus, and mentor to many

IF YOU judged Eoghan Harris only by all the people he has taught and mentored and straightened out on various things, always for nothing, then Eoghan Harris's contribution to two or three generations of Irish people is staggering. But there is so much more than that. In a country where consensus and mob rule have been two of the most dangerous traits of recent years he has consistently stood apart and told us inconvenient truths about everything from the provos to socialism to capitalism. Bizarrely the main thing his media enemies criticise him for is changing his mind as the facts change. That is another lesson this country is painfully learning. But the most important thing about Eoghan is that in a media that is all too often caught up in itself, he has consistently stood up for the sometimes unfashionable voice of the outsiders, the decent ordinary people in the middle, the ones whom he christened the coping classes. We will presumably remember to thank him only when he is gone. But there will be many more battles to be fought before then, and we will need the bright and sometimes scathing light of his intelligence and the sharp edge of his rigorous analysis and truth-searching in the days to come.



## BOB GELDOLF

Resilient rocker who conquered pain and helped millions



GELDOLF is another person who has seen unimaginable pain in his own life. He has seen disappointment too in his career, and he has seen a previously successful business — his music career — go down the toilet. But the same spitting anger that inspired my generation on *Tonic for the Troops* and the *Fine Art of Surfacing* would go on to inspire a whole generation to look afresh at Africa. Geldof asked "Why not?" as well in television, travel and internet sectors, with sometimes enormous success. Right now, we could do with some of his entrepreneurial spirit and his resilience and refusal to accept no for an answer. For the record, he also wrote one of the best Irish autobiographies of his generation and the later Boomtown Rats stuff is actually way better than it gets credit for. Again, he showed young Irish men there were different ways of being and that we were as good as anyone else.

## SIR ANTHONY O'REILLY

Believed in a vision and showed that the Irish could succeed on a world stage

ANOTHER man who changed how we see ourselves. An Irish man, and a rigger bugger at that, could become one of the biggest and sharpest operators in the American boardroom. So there was more to us than cute hoorism. He believed that an Irish newspaper could be the cornerstone of an international media corporation, and he was right. He also believed that Ireland should have a great luxury heritage brand, that our international reputations for craftsmanship and earthiness could be embodied in stunning pieces that rose from the unlikely *terroir* of Waterford. Despite pouring millions of his own money into Waterford, unions and the worldwide economy conspired against him. And he got damn all thanks for it here. His vision and grand dreams, which encompassed everything from crafts to the information age, and his generosity and willingness to put his money where his mouth is, despite getting no thanks for it, could inspire a new generation of entrepreneurs to keep plugging away despite the ingratitude.

