

NORTHCLARE

Country music star to linger a while in Lisdoonvarna

Carol Byrne

NATHAN Carter will headline this year's Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival and Willie Daly says he will be the one to find the right woman for the country music star.

Although he has played in Clare many times before, the Matchmaking Festival will be a new experience for Nathan, who is sure to attract huge crowds.

"I've performed a lot in Clare over the years, in Ennis and all around but I've never done this big festival. The only inking I've been given about the festival is that Willie, the matchmaker, is going to make sure I get hooked up this weekend. Apparently he's going to try and find the right woman for me," he said.

Nathan grew up in a family with strong Irish roots, his parents originating from Newry in County Down. He spent his youth coming to Ireland to compete in fleadhanna, which resulted in him taking All-Ireland medals for solo singing and in accordion at just 12 years of age.

The 26-year-old Liverpoolian shot to fame when he launched his *Wagon Wheel* album, with the song of the same name being a huge hit. He has recently released

his fifth album *Where I Wanna Be*, which has just reached number one in the Irish charts.

Asked why he thinks there has been such a revival in the popularity of country music, Nathan said, "I think country, as a genre, has had a renaissance over the last couple of years in Ireland and the UK. The whole Garth Brooks thing has shown the media how big country music is in Ireland and, in England, the likes of Kenny Rodgers and Dolly Parton have performed at things like Glastonbury for years, which really showed the media over there how big country is among people in the country."

He says his own catapult to the top of the charts has been down to the media in the main, which is set to continue with Nathan already filming his own television series.

"I've played on a lot of TV shows and radio shows and RTÉ have given me my own TV series, which we are starting to film next week, which will be shown in October. It's a music chat show. I've noticed a lot of younger people coming to the gigs and getting involved in the music too," he said.

Nathan outlined what those attending Saturday night's gig can expect.

"I released a brand new album two months ago followed by brand new songs. Nine of them I've co-written myself, so we do a lot of them in the show at the minute,

plus a lot of the standards that I have recorded over the years like *Caledonia* and *Wagon Wheel*. We travel around with an eight-piece band most of the time and put on a really good show and hopefully we'll enjoy the show," he said.

The Matchmaking Festival always involves plenty of dancing, with local establishments providing music from noon until late and so Nathan is encouraging people to show off their dance moves during his set.

Although he says this is nothing to do with him, Nathan said there is a *Wagon Wheel* dance, which has been going viral on YouTube if people want to look it up and give it a go.

"The *Wagon Wheel* line dance is on YouTube and it's definitely been a big sensation across the UK and Europe. I had nothing to do with that at all. I'm a terrible dancer but I'll be singing it and if people want to dance it, they are very welcome to learn the steps online and to come along and do it," he said.

Nathan concluded by saying he is not planning a flying visit and hopes to sample the atmosphere of the festival while he is in Lisdoonvarna.

"I will be staying around afterwards and hopefully there might be a bit of a party," he said.



■ Nathan Carter will perform in Lisdoonvarna this Saturday night.