

Biography



Artist: **Moya Brennan**
Product: **Two Horizons**

MOYA BRENNAN's genes have given life to some outstanding records. She's enjoyed many years as the voice of Clannad, one of Ireland's most respected acts. Her music has graced international film soundtracks, spiritual recordings, several television series and even dance anthems. Rest assured: her status as an iconic singer is in the bag. And she rightly believes that her new release, 'Two Horizons', is another special moment.

"I think it's the best thing I've done," she enthuses. "I'm loving it. I've never heard my voice sound the way it does now."

Moya's story becomes even more intriguing when you consider her marriage of Christian faith with phenomenal mainstream success. No other artist sings so clearly about their beliefs to quite so many people. This commitment to honesty as well as excellence has driven her from the start of a career that has notched up sales in excess of 10 million. With each album Moya takes up her role as spiritual guide for the masses, coaxing them along the spiritual journey, regardless of starting point.

Moya started this project in the summer of 2001. From an early stage, she'd been convinced that this record should have some kind of a narrative. To this extent, she started working on storyboards, aiming to thread a series of songs around a defined theme.

She was thinking about Ireland's past, and her reading included the blind harpist, Turlough O' Carolan. She was also fascinated by the global use of harp music in many of the world's traditional cultures and possible Irish connections, for instance, the kora harp in West Africa. Meanwhile a close friend was researching the ancient site of Tara, where, according to legend, the High Kings of Ireland met in pursuit of reconciliation and sublime art. Along came a prophecy from a stranger calling on her to play once again in the Lord's presence. The passions were up and the theme sealed.

The title 'Two Horizons' was partly inspired by a visit to the site of Tara. She'd arrived just before dawn, and when she ascended the hill, the moon was on one horizon, and directly opposite, the sun was on the rise. Here it was, a perfect metaphor for the past and the future, a place where music, memories and myth could all take shape.

Moya split her recording sessions between her home studio near Dublin and that of her producer, Ross Cullum, in London. Ross had previously worked on records by Tori Amos, Tears For Fears, and even Moya's sister, Enya. They began writing together, and on the track 'Bright Star', Moya was so inspired that she produced the words and vocal lines in two hours. Also, Ross was finding new ways to frame Moya's voice. "He was careful not to take my music out of its context," she notes. "But he also gave a modern, rhythmical aspect to it."

The energy of the project kept bringing her back to the harp and so the instrument appeared on a series of tracks. It also became an important motif in the theme – a quest through time and landscape to find the legendary harp that played at Tara. At a certain stage in recording the album Moya felt that the storyline had become too specific. She then decided to make things more open to interpretation. "When people talk to me about what Clannad's music has done to them," she explains, "they say that they put the record on and they form their own pictures and feelings and emotions. So I wanted to leave a certain amount to the imagination."

Guest musicians on the album included folk giant Martin Carthy, Robbie MacIntosh (sometime Paul McCartney guitarist) and old friend Anto Drennan, now working with The Corrs. Moya's band also played live on some key sessions, while a wealth of traditional players included Maire Breatnach, Nigel Eaton and Troy Doneckley.

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Moya is often asked whether Clannad is still an ongoing prospect. "The band still exists, even though we've taken time out" she stresses. "There's still stuff to be done there."

Moya and two of her brothers, Pol and Ciaran played their first shows with uncles, Noel and Padraig Duggan, in the 70s. All the band members spoke Gaelic as their first language, and their commercial chances seemed modest. However, they made a breakthrough record, 'Theme From Harry's Game' in 1982, which reached number five in the UK charts, and appeared on the 'Patriot Games' soundtrack ten years later. In 1986, the Clannad release, 'In A Lifetime', found Moya sharing vocals with Bono from U2. A compilation, 'Pastpresent', reached number five in the UK albums chart in 1989. The band have won a Grammy Award (for 1997's 'Landmarks'), and have provided the theme music to 'Last Of The Mohicans' and 'Robin Of Sherwood', while Moya also sang the theme to 'Circle Of Friends' in 1995. She has also collaborated with a host of musical luminaries including Paul Young, Bruce Hornsby, Joe Jackson, Robert Plant, Shane McGowan Paul Brady and Russell Watson. In 1999 she scored a worldwide hit with Chicane on 'Saltwater'.

Moya's solo albums include 'Maire' (1992), 'Misty Eyed Adventures' (1995), 'Perfect Time' (1998) and the Grammy nominated 'Whisper To The Wild Water' (1999).

Her autobiography, *The Other Side of the Rainbow* (2000), was a powerful and honest account of music, fame, misfortune, love and spirituality.

The 'Two Horizons' project produced 80 minutes of music that Moya and Ross were happy with. In the final stages, Chris Hughes (with fine production credentials himself) came in to oversee the final editing of the record, lending fresh ears and experience to shaping the finished product.

"It was a monumental task bringing the album down to its final running time but we've encapsulated the essence of what we started with." Moya says.

The same degree of synergy has carried 'Two Horizons' through photo sessions and designers. Artwork and costumes echo the 'Two Horizons' theme and soulfulness of the music. Everyone seems to appreciate and understand the project's broad picture, much to Moya's satisfaction.

"The next thing is putting it on the stage," she says, relishing the further challenges that 'Two Horizons' may bring. "It's going to be great fun."

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