

# Ronan's rollercoaster ride

• by Rodney Edwards

There I was browsing the wide range of delectable breakfast cereals in a local grocery store when my mobile phone goes. Mesmerised by the abundant amount of oat based chocolate coated products in front of me, I answered the call with a disorientated grunt; "Eh, hello?" "Ock hello Rodney, it's Ronan Keating here," came the rather courteous reply; "Oh hello Ronan," I whispered, sounding totally uninterested as I eyed up a packet of Coco Pops before realising I had completely forgotten about the arranged interview with the singer; "Do you want me to ring you back?," asked Ronan, sounding concerned that something was actually up; "Em, aye, would you?" I said, without hesitation; "I'm a little preoccupied at the moment to be honest." And so that was that, and I made my way to the checkout with a packet of Choco Rocks under my arm and Ronan probably got back to watching Bargain Hunt or reruns of Top of the Pops from the 90s. A few minutes later he phoned back again and it was time to talk – once the pleasantries were out of the way I wanted to know if Boyzone were getting back together or not because (ex manager) Louis bloomin' Walsh won't stop blathering on about it. "Boyzone are not coming back. No matter what is said in the press, I'd happily go down to the bookies in the morning and bet that it's not going to happen." said a defiant Ronan, quashing rumours that his old band are to return to the pop scene after much speculation in the press over the last year.

The Irish star also believes reformed Take That are the undisputed Kings of Pop. "Take That are the best. They are amazing, I went to see them when they played in Dublin and was just blown away by how phenomenal they were. Everything about them was just amazing and I was very impressed, not many bands can compare to them."

Not even Boyzone? In just six amazing years, Boyzone knocked up 16 consecutive top five hits and six number ones - including "Words", "All That I Need" and "No Matter What" and they even sold a staggering 15 million albums worldwide.

Boyzone were the biggest boy band on the planet and Ronan along with Keith Duffy, Shane Lynch, Mikey Graham and Stephen Gately were untouchable. "We made it up as we went along," says Ronan. "It was rock 'n' roll. We weren't throwing TVs out of windows but we'd be up all hours drinking every night. Next morning we'd get on the plane drunk. It was full on. There were parties thrown for us after every gig, money thrown at us - all sorts."

But it wasn't to last forever as Boyzone split in 1999 when



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Ronan walked out to go solo. Initially it was supposed to be a temporary break but after his solo career rocketed particularly following the massive success of "When You Say Nothing At All", part of the soundtrack to Notting Hill, plus a hit album he never returned.

And why bother? His solo career has propelled him into mega stardom and shows no signs of diminishing. Clocking up a total of 14 top ten singles (most of them covers), Ronan

has had big success with hits such as "Life is a Rollercoaster", "The Long Goodbye", and "If Tomorrow Never Comes", as well as three number one albums in addition to his previous success with the group - plus he's had no singles which have charted outside of the top ten.

He also believes his last album 'Bring You Home' is the best record he's ever made; "I think my strengths in music are my ballads so I made the best record I could about love songs which I know I'm best at. It's full of heart and soul and the inspiration came from my life and my imagination. I don't need to do or say things to place me in a position where I look a bit cooler. I wanted to be Jon Bon Jovi and Bono. But I'm not that cool. I don't need to be. I'm not a rock star. I am who I am." He said.

In the past Ronan has collaborated with some big names in music, the likes of Yusef Islam, Leann Rimes and Lulu but wants to try and move his popular duets to a whole new direction; "The next time I do a duet I want to try something different. I'd like to work with Kayne West or Mary J Blige because of their diversity and how different they are to me - Kayne is just brilliant. I don't want to work with the likes of Will Young because duets are about collaborating with people who are from a different world than you."

When Ronan fell out with former manager and X Factor judge Louis Walsh it was one of the most spectacular celeb fallings out of all time. Ronan says the music mogul destroyed their close bond when he started talking about him negatively in the press, labelling him 'a lot like Cliff Richard' and accusing him of 'not being able to sing,' so it's fair to say it looks like the ongoing feud will never be resolved; "I have no reason to want to go and meet up with Louis." says Ronan. "If he comes up and says sorry then I'll shake his hand and let bygones be bygones. He's said a lot of things about me and I feel embarrassed for him. My music is doing well, my records are selling, my tours sell out and I'm back on top again and if he wants to keep saying those things about me then fine but I feel really sorry for him."

With fellow Irish megastars Bono and Bob Geldof constantly trying to save the world, has Ronan any wish to set down his microphone and go and join them? "No. I wouldn't know what to do but I do think what they are doing is great. Bono doesn't care about the negative press because he's helping save lives. Bono and Bob are incredibly intellectual and well educated and they are both using their privileged positions to try and help people so I think it's better for the world we live in." finishes Ronan.

Ronan Keating plays the Palace Grounds in Armagh on September 22.