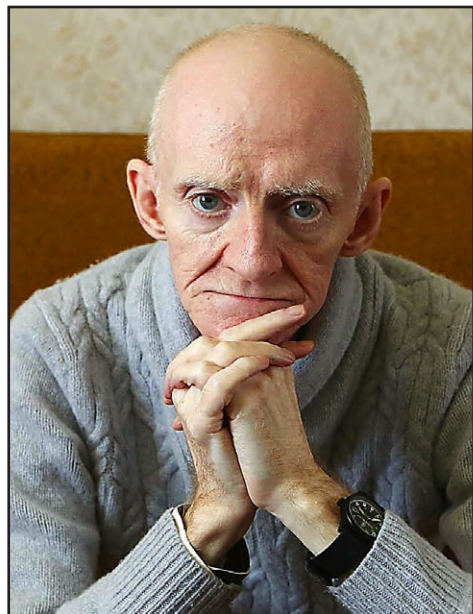


it's friday!



Reflective: Philip has terminal cancer

It wasn't The Pogues

by **Jason O'Toole**

WELL I can't say that I have ever been *in* the music business,' Philip Chevron states mischievously when I ask what his favourite moment in the music industry has been. 'Do you think they'd have me?'

Lead guitarist with The Pogues, and the man who wrote some of their biggest hits including *Thousands Are Sailing*, it's safe to say that Philip's place

in the music industry and the fans' hearts are well secured. Both were left reeling recently when The Pogues relayed the heartbreaking news that Philip, who has been suffering from head and neck cancer for a number of years, has developed an inoperable tumour that will 'prove fatal with time'.

Despite his failing health, the 55-year-old Dubliner has vowed to carry on as normal for as long as he can, since doctors are unable to give him a 'cut-off point'. No longer able to speak as a result of the disease, he agreed to be interviewed over a lengthy exchange of emails. Last week, he told the Mail in extremely brave and moving terms, how he refuses to be cowed by his terminal diagnosis. And today he shares his memories of being part of one of the most successful — and dysfunctional — bands of the Eighties.

Born Philip Ryan, his musical journey began in Santry, north Dublin, where growing up he learned to play music on a 'sophisticated toy piano' before being inspired to switch to the guitar by his 'cool uncle'.

In the mid-Seventies, Philip first made an impact on the Dublin music scene as part of punk band The Radiators From Space. Hugely popular with Irish audiences, in 1976 they were signed to indie label Chiswick Records. When their first album, *TV Tube Heart*, was released the following year, the band were tipped for international stardom and made the move to London.

'We went to London for the eternal reason that there was no work for us in Ireland,' Philip recounts. 'But this also put us into the commercial treadmill in Britain, which in turn signalled our "end" when we did not live up to commercial demands with our second album. We did not get the breaks we may have deserved, but that's just showbusiness.'

It was at The Radiators' first ever gig in London when Philip met Shane MacGowan. 'Shane came to see The Radiators at our very first gig in London in 1977 and I've known him ever since. He's a very attractive individual because the energies that make him great are the same ones that make him a pain in the a**.' He appears careless of his gifts, heedless, but he's not really.

'It's tougher for him than it is for any of the people dropping like flies in the wake of his unreliability. He's a selfish guy, but that's part of the equation too; he has to protect whatever it is he needs to protect in order to be Shane MacGowan. So, you know, if you don't understand this, don't join his band.'

After The Radiators split in 1981, Philip went to work alongside Shane for a chain of independent record shops and the two became close friends.

'Shane and I worked in separate but related Oldies record emporia — Rock On (me) and Rocks Off (he) in London. My one is immortalised in Thin Lizzy's *The Rocker*. I was there for four years and loved it. It was like a post-graduate course in 20th-century music. It was a real wrench to leave it to join The Pogues full-time.'

Initially, Shane had invited Philip along as a producer to help the band record some songs for an EP. He joined them full-time when Shane decided to concentrate on singing after their successful debut album.

Known as much for their party-hard lifestyles as their music, as The Pogues' fame grew over the next decade, Philip found his own drinking began to spiral out of control. 'What happened to me happens to guys every day of the week in the real world. I was an alcoholic reaching his rock bottom and I needed to do something about that or die, sim-

ple as. Amusingly and ironically, I was hiding in plain sight in the most perfect hiding place in the world — The Pogues — but that's neither here nor there.

'I was a drunk and I needed to figure out a way to deal with that before it became too late. Alcoholism changes you fundamentally. I think every alkie understands that implicitly the first time they drink alcoholically, which is when you drink specifically to be someone else. Sooner or later, someone else is who you are, someone you hear about the next day, someone you don't know, someone you can't really imagine, someone of whom you're ashamed.'

After being rushed to hospital with liver failure that 'almost killed me twice', Philip spent the best part of 1994 in and out of hospital. In 1995, he quit drinking — and the band.

He strenuously rejects reports from the time which suggested he also had a drug problem. 'I drank but I seldom drugged! Like most rock 'n' roll musicians, I have experimented with drugs. In my case, none of them really passed the litmus test and I found it quite easy to just leave them be. I was already addicted to the drug that is alcohol.'

'Anyone can end up being an alcoholic. It's a genetic predisposition, for the most part — unrelated to whether or not you bought the distillery.'

By this time, Shane had already left The Pogues. Philip insists that the widely-held view that Shane was sacked by the band for unprofessional behaviour is not true. 'Shane wasn't actually kicked out. It had become clear he hated touring, but was proving unable to actually say so. He needed a nudge to admit it was the case. The rest of us had not yet become tour weary and wanted to carry on.'

AFTER he was released from hospital, Philip rejoined The Pogues. However, he felt that it wasn't the same outfit without Shane at the helm. 'When I went back to the band I discovered I didn't really want to rejoin and they'd probably had enough of me too. Despite the commercial success —

Tuesday Morning was our biggest hit since *Fairytale Of New York* and showed we could carry on without Shane — frankly the whole thing was getting wearying for all of us. It was still an interesting band, it just wasn't what we understood The Pogues to be.

'It's important to understand that once a chemistry as volatile but perfect as The Pogues falls apart — as it started to with the removal/departure of Shane — the remaining elements no longer bump up against each other in the productive way they once did. A band is a living organism.'

'By the time I left again, Terry Woods and James Fearnley had also gone, key men both. I wasn't quite sure what was left but it wasn't doing much to get excited about and that was both all our faults and none of our fault.'

'The Pogues without so many Pogues was still The Pogues and still an impressive contemporary band. But they were never more than that — as they had once been. So what was the point?'

'But leaving that bubble is incredibly scary, too. You find a niche, it becomes the part you play. You could easily grow fat and cosy playing it. But hell, you know, you're not yet 40. Get a life!'

While Shane MacGowan's songwriting genius has often overshadowed the other band members, Philip is himself a talented composer, writing The Pogues hit *Thousands Are Sailing* as well as *Song Of The Faithful Departed* for The Radiators, which was later covered by Christy Moore. 'I've always been reasonably secure in my position as a songwriter,' Philip states. 'It's a little irk-

Free Sky+ box

with free standard set-up
when you join Sky TV from just €27 a month



Replay the best bits Catch every episode TV when it suits you Put the action on hold



1 Watch TV your way with a free Sky+ box

Pause, record and rewind live TV with a free Sky+ box

2 Enjoy unmissable entertainment

Watch brand new and award-winning shows for just €27 a month with our Value Pack

Value Pack – 38 channels including



Plus many more...

€27
a month

OR

Family Pack – 103 channels including all channels in the Value Pack



Plus many more...

€35
a month

Whichever Pack you choose – get all your favourites as standard



Channels available without subscription.

3 Add Unlimited Broadband – free for 6 months

Now new and existing customers can enjoy:

- ✓ Broadband with absolutely no limits
- ✓ Wireless signal with unbeatable reliability
- ✓ Inclusive evening and weekend calls
- ✓ Free Sky Hub – simple and secure connection

Save €300 a year vs Eircom*



Join Ireland's favourite digital TV provider, now with Unlimited Broadband



0818 716 043

Please have your credit or Laser Card to hand when you call



sky.ie



Believe in better

*Eircom comparison: Sky Unlimited Broadband and Talk Freetime costs €40 per month. Eircom 24Mb Ultimate Broadband with unlimited off peak phone package without TV costs €60 per month. €300 savings over 12 month contract. Eircom phone packages include 30 minutes of mobile calls. Other Eircom offers may apply. See eircom.net for details. Correct at 30 May 2013. Sky Broadband Discount: Sky Broadband Unlimited or Sky Connect Unlimited Free for six months when you join with Sky Talk and line rental (currently €30 per month). Thereafter you'll pay the then current monthly cost for Sky Broadband Unlimited or Sky Connect Unlimited (currently €40pm and €50pm respectively with Sky TV and Sky Talk Freetime and €47.50pm and €57.50pm with Sky TV and Sky Talk Anytime). Offer ends 27 June 2013. Sky Broadband/Sky Connect: Product availability is subject to location. Sky Talk (including line rental) required. 12 month minimum subscription. Set-up costs and router delivery charge may apply. Active compatible Eircom phone line required. Prices quoted are based on customers combining their broadband with Sky Talk Freetime. Sky Talk Freetime: Inclusive evening and weekend calls of up to an hour to the Republic of Ireland local and national landline numbers only (excludes calls to Directory Enquiries, indirect access, dial-up internet numbers, mobile, and 0700 numbers). Fair Use Policy applies (see contracts for details). Sky TV: Sky TV from €27-€79 per month (pm). Sky+ Box: Free Sky+ box when you join Sky TV on a 12 month contract. Excludes existing Sky+ box households. Offer only open to new residential customers in ROI. One free box per household. Set-up: Free standard set-up (worth €30) for new Sky TV customers. Non-standard set-up may cost extra. General: Boxes must be connected to a fixed telephone line and prices may vary if you live in a flat. You must get any consents required (e.g. landlord's). Prices for Direct Debit payments only. Continuous debit/credit card mandate costs €0.75 pm. These offers are not available with any other offers. UTV available without a subscription. It is not provided by Sky; its availability is outside Sky's control. Manual tuning of your box is required. Further terms apply. Correct at 30 May 2013.