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Hook'd on his music, the talented singer and songwriter Dennis Locorriere who plays An Grianán Theatre, Letterkenny, this Sunday

Alone again with Dennis Locorriere

BY SEÁN P. FEENY

A talented performer with a soulful voice and his guitar is all you need to fill the seats of a theatre and one New Jersey singer is the right man for this job.

This Sunday, 28 October, Dennis Locorriere, a man who needs no introduction will take to the stage at An Grianán Theatre, Letterkenny.

For people who do need an introduction, here's some of the hit songs Dennis recorded: 'Sexy Eyes', 'When you're in love with a beautiful woman', 'A little bit more', 'Sylvia's mother' 'A couple more years', yes he was indeed the lead singer of the hit band, Dr Hook.

Dennis will be performing on his own with his guitar and that's just the way he likes it, the singer said: "For the most part play on my own nowadays, here and there I'd have a band, but I'm just so flattered when people come to see me and I get to talk to them during the show.

"There's a lot of communication in my shows and when I come off stage I really feel that the audience got to know me."

In 1985 the members of Dr Hook last performed together on their farewell tour, so Dennis is well used to taking to the stage on his own and really enjoys it.

"Even when we were still together

there'd be a section in the show where the band would wander off and I'd play a few songs on my own so it wasn't a thing that was completely strange to me.

"Having a band is a big responsibility. Now it's just me and my road manager, but when Hook ended I couldn't just walk away but had to make sure that everyone was taken care of."

Dennis is no stranger to Ireland having been performing here for many years: "I think I recall coming to Ireland first with Dr Hook when we played here in the mid to late 70s.

"Irish people love songs that mean something and it's so nice to know that they take the music to their hearts."

Dennis said that he would never dismiss his back catalogue but rather combines it with his new songs in a show.

He said: "The thing is if the fans trusted me so many years ago to write a good song, I'd hope they'll still enjoy my new music.

"When you know that people love your old songs it keeps your standards up as you have something to live up to.

"I would rather sing something that nobody knows to begin with and make people think 'Who is this guy' and then play one of the big hits and they turn around and say 'Oh my god I've been listening to this guy for

years,'" said Dennis.

Dennis said that he has received a lot of loyalty from fans in Britain and Ireland: "If they took you to heart once, they keep you there. In America it's different as the country is so vast, trends are always changing and I always said you'd have to set yourself on fire in New York to be seen in California," he laughed.

But Dennis' audience has changed over the years, much to his delight, he said: "There are a lot more younger people. "Isn't it great when parents turn their kids onto something like the music they listened to?" he laughed, "It's great to know that you can be a bonding factor between the two and it means that they're not just coming because of the past but also to hear the new music."

Dennis said he tries to be a very approachable artist as he knows what it's like to be a fan just wanting to say 'Hi' to an artist you admire.

He said: "I went to a friend's wedding and George Harrison was also there. Now I'm a huge Beatles fan and just wasn't sure about going up to him at first but then I did and he was such a nice guy.

"It's so hard to gather up the courage to go up and say hello to people whom you admire and I always remember that when someone comes to me asking for an autograph, because I'm no different to them."

Dennis was about 14 when the Beatles conquered America, but he was a music fan long before that thanks to the influence of his mother.

"My mother had me when she was 19 so when I was old enough to appreciate music she was still in her mid 20s and listened to great singers like Dinah Washington and Johnny Mathis, just great vocalist that influenced me at a very early age.

"But it was the Beatles that made me think maybe I could do this and it was through my mother's appreciation of music that I really got into it and she always remained my No 1 fan."

Songs Dennis has written have been recorded by Willie Nelson, Crystal Gayle, Bob Dylan, Waylon Jennings, Southside Johnny, Olivia Newton-John, Helen Reddy and B.J. Thomas and many more and he said it's very flattering to hear someone has recorded your song.

"For me writing is a lonely process and then you make that connection to the audience when you perform the song and they think 'Hey, I feel the same way!' and then to hear that another artist is taking the gamble of recording your song is just a great feeling as you know they felt something when they heard the song," said Dennis.

"I love singing the old songs and when it comes to the new material I try not to deliver anything you could-

n't question me on and people will know I write the songs from the heart.

Dennis grew up in New Jersey and was always well used to public city transport and never felt he wanted to drive.

"When I was growing up in the New York area everybody I knew who had a car complained. They'd park the car and hop on to a bus, where I was already sitting," he laughed.

Asked which Irish artists would stand out for him Dennis mentioned one name in particular: "I got Christie Hennessy's album *The Rehearsal* and I just loved the songs he wrote but then a friend of mine wandered off with the cassette and I haven't been able to get the album since."

Dennis' music and his outgoing personality are definitely something to look forward to and it will no doubt be one of the highlights of An Grianán's year so far and shouldn't be missed.

Alone again with Dennis Locorriere, an intimate concert with this great songwriter begins at 8pm on Sunday, 28 October, at An Grianán Theatre, Letterkenny.

Admission is 25 euro and tickets are available from the box office on Tel 07491 20777 and for more information on Dennis Locorriere log onto www.dennislocorriere.com