



GLEN HANSARD DIDN'T HE RAMBLE

ANTI-/WARNER MUSIC

indie folk

Ireland's Glen Hansard, known for his work with The Frames, The Swell Season and the movie *Once*, has just recorded his second solo album, *Didn't He Ramble*.

It's essentially a sparse and quite reflective acoustic offering with only one song, 'Lonely Deserter', getting the pulse racing in terms of tempo.

Didn't He Ramble, which may have taken its name from the Jellyroll Morton song, opens with 'Grace Beneath The Pines', which begins with a slow Irish drone before Hansard's vocals come to the fore on the heartfelt tale.

'Wedding Ring' gives a nod to Dylan's laconic version of 'Corrina Corrina', while first single, the Celtic soul-driven 'Winning Streak', is such that it would be a good vehicle for Van Morrison.

"I'll take that," Hansard laughs down the line from County Kildare. "I'll definitely take that as a compliment but, y'know, it's funny because I'll sometimes write something and then think it sounds a bit too much like a Van Morrison song and that I could never use it.

"And then I'll write a song and think it sounds like a Van Morrison song and go, 'Oh, that's brilliant'. And so, while I try to steer away from all that, I sometimes think that if my songs remind people of a great, great songwriter then it can't be such a bad thing.

"I think it also gives a little nod to John Martyn's 'May You Never', but the biggest influence on that song was Dylan's 'Forever Young'," he suggests. "It's a good wish to a friend."

"I'm actually very proud of all of the songs on the album," Hansard then says. "You write these things and think, 'Yeah, I might play that at a show', but with records you need to have a flow so it took a while to get the order of the songs right.

The poignant 'McCormack's Wall' is a song that has been

around for a while as footage can be found on the internet of the singer performing it at Sydney Opera House as part of his last visit.

Is there actually such a place as McCormack's Wall?

"No," Hansard responds, "but the song is about the place in Ireland where John McCormack, the great Irish tenor, was born. One night I was with a very dear friend who is also a musician and, on a night out, we accidentally got drunk.

"We'd been to a few places but we ended up where John McCormack was born which is now a derelict old house with a stable. So we broke in and sat there with a bottle of wine which we'd stolen from the dressing room of a friend's band earlier in the night and toasted and saluted John McCormack.

"And then we went down to the grave of Wolfe Tone, the Irish revolutionary from the 1798 Irish Rebellion, and raised a glass to him but, somehow, during the course of the night, my friend and I got kind of romantic. That was never supposed to happen and the next day we talked about it when we were sober and what it all meant and what we then meant to each other."

And what's the traditional Irish piece right the end of that song?

"Ah, that's just myself and fiddle player John Sheahan from The Dubliners who is now their only surviving member," Hansard responds. "I had written this little thing kinda like, 'A diddly dee, a diddly dah dah', and I then asked John to come round to my place to play it.

"So we recorded that bit at my house," he adds, "but I am quite delighted you think it's a traditional thing because I wrote it apparently."

The caustic 'My Little Ruin' is a very angry song.

"It is an angry song - and it's one I wrote in Byron Bay - in so much that it's about a friend who is a complete mess," Hansard reveals. "I have a friend who is so talented and so wonderfully gifted but he will not stop messing up.

"He's a complete mess, so that song is dedicated to him," Hansard concludes with a sigh. *Robert Dunstan*