

TOP COMIC IN THE SPOTLIGHT

TOMMY BLASTED FOR 'RACIST' GAG



STAND-UP: Tommy Tiernan

'NOT FUNNY': Emer O'Neill



'Not everybody who is African is a taxi driver. I have a degree in education'

RTE star Emer hits out after joke on 'African Savannah full of taxi drivers'

RTE star Emer O'Neill has hit out at comedian Tommy Tiernan after he told a controversial joke about taxi drivers.

Emer attended the Navan native's comedy gig in Vicar Street in Dublin on Friday night.

But she said her "heart sank" when he began by telling the audience a joke about Dublin Zoo – claiming: "My daughter told me not to tell this joke".

The mum-of-two recalled how Tiernan began telling the joke: "So I was at the zoo the other day and looking at the penguins, they are like little nuns walking around with rosary beads.

"Then the wolves were so Irish fierce/strong then we went to the African Savannah and ...it was full of taxi drivers!"

She claimed: "He acknowledged the room was 'full of white people' and said that everyone is laughing so it mustn't be a racist joke."

O'Neill added: "I'm shocked more than anything.

"A lot of people have said to me 'you should have known before you went that this is his thing?' Like what do you mean, 'this is his thing?' Who in this day and age is still writing comedy where racism is supposed to be funny?"

"He comes out on stage, and you can hear me cheering him. His first joke out of the gate – the first joke

■ Sandra MALLON
Showbiz Editor

of the night – he started with 'my daughter told me that I shouldn't say this joke' so that was the first thing he said.

"As soon as he said that I kind of thought to myself, I wonder what this is about.

"I'm at a professional gig in Vicar Street, I'm not thinking I'm potential in a place that is going to be harmful for me.

"My heart sank a little bit as soon as I heard the word 'Africa'.

"I just thought 'please don't do this to me. I'm literally one of the only people of colour sitting here full of a room of white people.'"

Upset

The Bray native was left so upset, she ended up walking out of the gig with her friends a few minutes later, admitting she felt too scared to get up straight away in case she was heckled.

"I was like a statue. I was processing what was said. When he said, 'I'm here in a room full of white people', I wanted to say 'well hey, I'm not white' but nothing came out.

"I wanted to stand up because what he said was not right. Not everybody who is African is a taxi driver. I have a degree in education.

"I wanted to leave but I was scared because I felt that if I stand up now

after him saying 'See you are all laughing, it's not racist' and I stand up, I already could hear two women beside me saying 'oh look at her, she does not seem happy with that'.

"I was also embarrassed because I felt so bad for my friends that their night was ruined over the potential that we were going to have to leave."

The anti-racism activist decided to highlight the incident on her Instagram account, sharing a video of Tommy on stage before he told the joke.

She later told her Instagram of the incident: "A night that was to be fun and full of laughter turned sour with a way too close to the bone joke by @officialtommedian at his @vicar_st gig tonight."

Emer told us: "For me, this is the perfect example of 'there is no racism here in Ireland' and this is Exhibit A because I sat in a room full of my fellow Irishmen and they allowed for that joke to happen."

But Emer insisted she is not calling him a racist. "I'm not calling him racist. What was said was racist and stereotypical – that is a completely different thing.

"For me, what my concerns are is that Vicar Street be held accountable that it is an act of theirs that they have on stage, they're giving him a platform."

We have contacted reps for RTE and Tommy Tiernan for comment.

Chat with football icon was a Roy wonder..

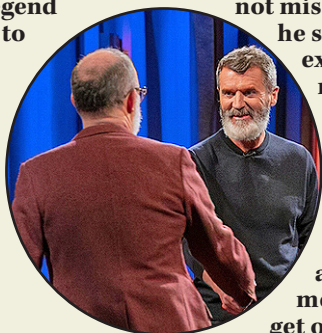
COMEDIAN Tommy Tiernan was hailed as "brilliant" for his interview with Roy Keane.

The football legend spoke at length to Tommy about his career and family life on Tiernan's Saturday night chat show on RTE One.

The Cork native revealed that the "only time" he cried during his career was when he "left United and had

a few disagreements with some people".

Keane also got candid about not missing football when he stopped playing, explaining that as much as he loved it in the moment, he was glad he wasn't a player who clung to the past. "A lot of ex-players do sit around saying 'poor me' but you have to get off your backside and do something," he said. "Whether it's coaching



badges, TV work, you have to do something."

Viewers were very impressed with the interview, saying it was a "brilliant" way to kick off the new season of the show.

Fan

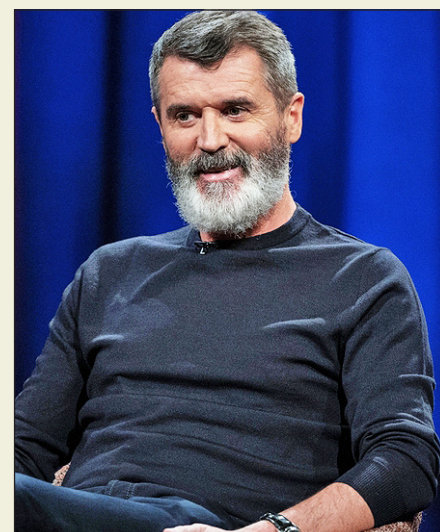
One said on social media: "Could listen to Roy Keane talk forever. As a lifelong Man Utd fan he was one of the best players to ever play the game.

"What an eventful life he has lived, on & off the pitch. My absolute favourite pundit working right now – a match ain't the same if he's not

there." Another wrote: "That's one way to start the new series of the Tommy Tiernan Show, starting with the best in having the legend Roy Keane on."

A third said: "This is brilliant. I think if the two lads were given the hour even it'd not stop being brilliant. Roy Keane probably not who I'd have expected on this show but definitely delivering."

A fourth commented: "Tommy & Roy. You really would watch this all night, Roy Keane is ridiculous, intense and hilarious in the same half breath."



SUCCESS: Roy Keane on the Tommy Tiernan Show and (left) with the presenter

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DUNPHY: End of era for Blues

CLAUDINE'S GRIEF FOR UNCLE

TEARS FOR PAUDIE



CONTROVERSY: Tiernan and (below) Emer O'Neill

Tommy in race row over gig joke

A SHOCKED RTE presenter walked out of Tommy Tiernan's stand-up show on Friday night over a gag. Emer O'Neill's blasted Tiernan for comparing animals in Dublin Zoo's African Savannah to taxi drivers.



MODEL Claudine Keane has led tributes to her uncle Paudie Palmer who has died from injuries sustained in an alleged hit and run. Claudine said her family are "heartbroken" at the death of the popular broadcaster.



Beloved pundit dies after 'hit and run'

PAGE FIVE

TRIBUTE: Paudie Palmer and (left) his model niece Claudine Keane



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RTE STARS RATTLED

EXCLUSIVE
BY SANDRA MALLON

RTE was forced to close the canteen that feeds its stars as it battles an infestation of mice and rats.

The station has been undergoing construction work on its grounds and it appears the building has become plagued with "rodent activity".

A spokesman said: "RTE has

TURN TO PAGE 7

SQUEAKY CLEAN
RTE site in the capital



Canteen forced to shut as station's HQ plagued with 'rodent activity'

RTE canteen shuts down over mice & rats fears

FROM PAGE ONE

a number of controls in place to monitor rodent activity on our sites, which can occur from time to time, particularly due to building or other works on site or in the area.

“Where any rodent activity is detected, as happened recently, experts are brought on site to assess such activity and take the appropriate action, including precautionary measures.

“The main canteen is currently closed for essential maintenance.”

We have learned the main canteen was forced to close its doors to staff this week after a visit from the health and safety inspector.

In an email seen by us, RTE said to staff: “I wanted to advise you of some arrangements we have put in place while the main restaurant on our Donnybrook campus is closed for essential maintenance.”

The email states that staff can eat at the Bite Cafe until January 13.

In 2018, RTE star Ryan Tubridy revealed staff were on “high alert” after the radio centre became infested with rodents.

Having complimented the Clonmel builders who were working on site for being “neat” and “clean”, the Late Late Show host revealed at the time that their digging is causing the problem.

He added: “I was told this morning that we have to be on high alert for mice.”

MTV seeks couples for reality show

EXCLUSIVE By SANDRA MALLON Showbiz Editor

IRELAND is set to host its own version of Big Brother, the Irish Mirror can reveal.

MTV are on the lookout for eight to 12 housemates to live in a secret “Big Brother-style” location.

Filming in Ireland is due in the coming weeks, with producers also keen to add couples to the house.

A source has said that Life Of The Party will be the first show of its kind.

The insider added: “The show will see cast members living together in a Big Brother-style location where they are faced with challenges and club appearances.”

Tommy's heartbreak over mum's suicide..

BRAVE WORDS
Tiernan told listeners of family's pain

Broadcaster opens up on relationship after tragic loss of Helen

BY SANDRA MALLON

TOMMY Tiernan has opened up about the pain of losing his mother to suicide in 2010 - admitting the way she died wasn't “a surprise” to him.

The comedian spoke honestly about the death of his mother Helen - revealing for the first time that she killed herself.

The Navan man said: “So my mam basically took her own life in 2010 and what I think happened, definitely not with all suicides, but with some people... I think my mam, she obviously found things incredibly difficult.

“But she also lived at a strange distance from us, even though she was in the same house.

“There was a part of her that wasn't comfortable or couldn't cope with or didn't want or wasn't able for maybe - a better way of saying it - the kind of intimacy of family life.

“But she was a woman at the same time who was hugely part of setting up the first Meath Women's Refuge. So herself and her friend would've been part of a small collective of women in Navan in the 80s who decided let's set up a refuge for battered wives.

“There could be children all around the housing estate that we grew up in saying, ‘Your mam really looked after me. Any time my mam was sick, your mam looked after me’ and ‘I loved your mam’ and all that kind of stuff.

DANGER

“But when it got to her own house she just couldn't share in the same way.

“She couldn't cope. When someone who has lived like that dies the way mam did, part of it isn't a surprise. Sometimes it's still the same. The relationship goes on.”

The 53-year-old told how he still has that relationship with his mother, saying over the years he has learned to love her more in death.

Tommy said: “She would always be on my mind in some kind of way. I would always be in dialogue with her. I would always be thinking about the strange, odd, quare life that she had.”

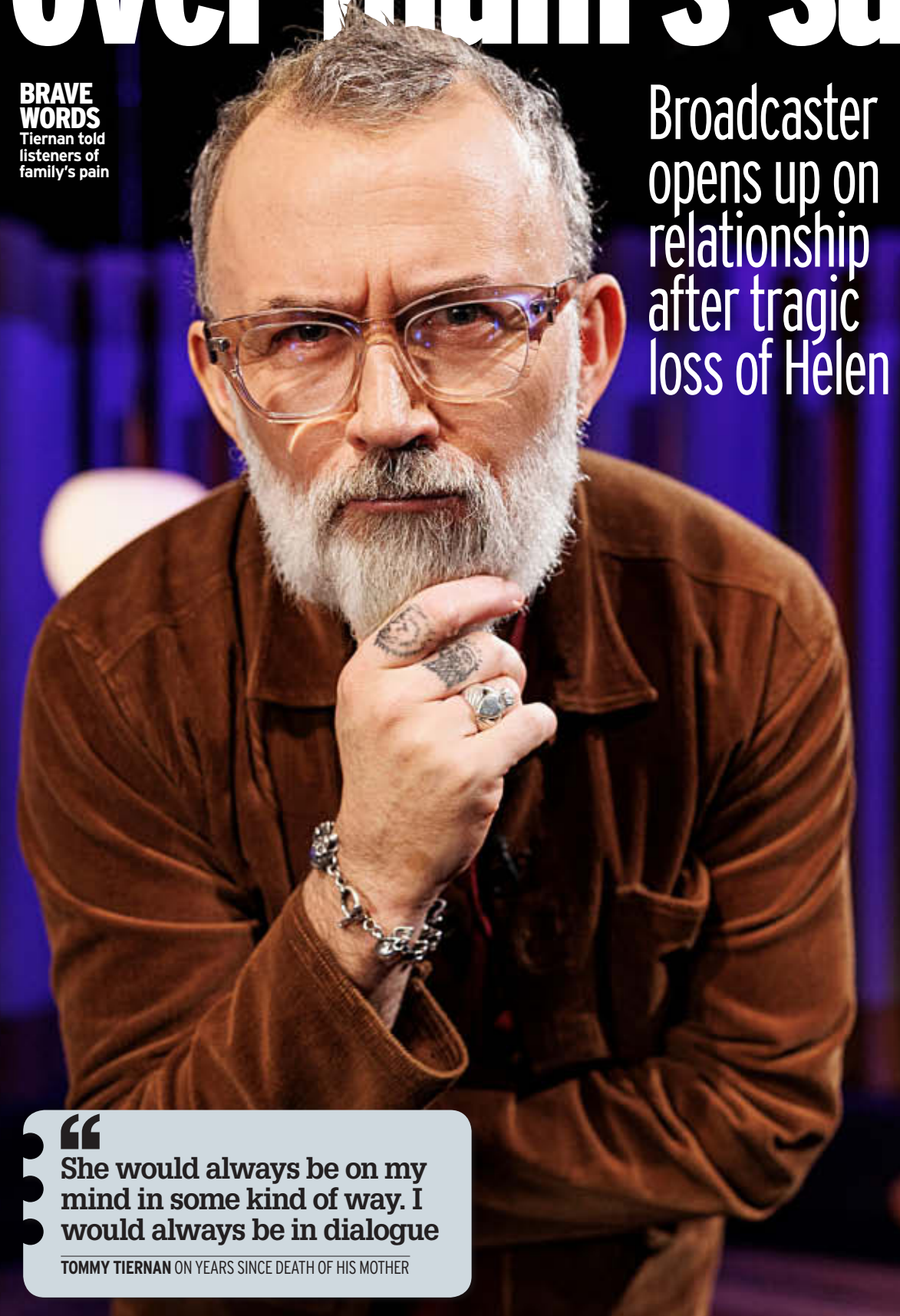
The Derry Girls star told listeners on RTE Radio One he was unsure if his mother ever sought professional help. He added: “It's not to say that she wasn't a great mother.

“I love her more than I did when she was alive. I've more empathy towards her. But there's still sharks in that particular pool. There's a danger. So it is a gradual thing. It goes on and on.”

Tommy made the shock revelations on RTE Radio One while talking about the return of his popular Saturday night television chat show.

■ The Tommy Tiernan Show starts on RTE One tonight at 9.40pm.

news@irishmirror.ie



“She would always be on my mind in some kind of way. I would always be in dialogue

TOMMY TIERNAN ON YEARS SINCE DEATH OF HIS MOTHER

Fired Apprentice Emma ‘thought she'd be in final’



OUT Emma Browne

BY SANDRA MALLON Showbiz Editor
IRISH Apprentice star Emma Browne who was the first contestant to go in the BBC series said she was sure she would make it to the final.

The senior account executive has opened up for the first time about being fired by Lord Sugar on TV.

Speaking to Dermot and Dave on Today FM, Emma said she was shocked when she was the first contestant booted out.

Speaking about her fellow candidates, she said: “They just wanted a trip to the Caribbean, they wanted a little boat trip.

“I was there to sell and I was there

to show what I was able to do. Unfortunately it was me [that was voted off] and going on the show obviously there was a chance I was going to hear those words [‘You're fired!']

“But to be honest with you when I walked in last and all the other candidates were there I thought to

myself ‘Jesus I have this in the bag’ and I'm going to be in the final.’”

Speaking about what it was like being in front of Lord Sugar, Emma said: “It was so surreal, I felt like I was in a dream to be honest and I still do.

“He's not as mean as he maybe comes across.”

BANNON BOMBSHELL

Architect pals knew Dwyer... his double life was so shocking.

HORROR CRIME LEFT PROFESSION REELING SAYS TELLY'S DERMOT AS SHOW RETURNS



DRAMA: Michelle

Michelle sets sights on soap

RUPAUL'S Drag Race star Michelle Visage has revealed she's eyeing up a role on EastEnders as Kat Slater's cousin.

Speaking to The One Show hosts Alex Jones and Jermaine Jenas, Michelle explained her plans for the show, explaining that she wouldn't be putting on a "fake East End accent" and instead could be herself.

Fake

"I come to town, I'm not looking for a permanent position I'm not going to fake an East End accent, I'm going to be me, from New Jersey," she said.

Alex asked if her plan had gone into motion, but Michelle confirmed that nothing had started.



NEW MUM: Rihanna

She Rih-ly longs for a big family

RIHANNA wants more children with her partner ASAP Rocky.

The 34-year-old pop star welcomed a son with the rapper last May.

And an insider has said becoming parents has "brought them so much closer together" and she is already thinking of becoming pregnant again soon.

Sync

A source said: "Being a mum has changed Ri's life for the better in every way. She and Rocky are totally in sync as parents and are loving the experience."

"It's brought them so much closer as a couple. Ri wants a big family — she doesn't see any need to hang around."



BACK IN THE ROOM: Dermot and (below) Conor and Amy on first episode of new series



ROOM To Improve star Dermot Bannon says his fellow architects were "shocked and angered" when they learned of evil killer architect Graham Dwyer's double life.

Dermot — who returns to our screens with a new series of RTE One show Room To Improve this Sunday — admitted that while he didn't personally know jailed architect Dwyer, colleagues did and he said everyone was shocked when he was found guilty of the heinous crime that shocked Ireland.

Dwyer was convicted of the murder of 36-year-old Elaine O'Hara in 2015.

He is currently appealing this after he was found guilty of murdering the vulnerable care worker in 2012, with his lawyers arguing that the retention of mobile phone data used in the case was an "opportunistic form of mass surveillance".

Speaking exclusively to *The Star*, Bannon said: "No, I never have [met him], which is unusual as we're the same age. I've never met him."

Practice

"I know people who know him and who worked with him. I know people who worked in the same practice as him — yes, it is a small world. Like everyone kind of knew Graham Dwyer. I never came across him, never met him but for a lot of people they were really shocked."

"It was amazing the double life he lived. That was what I heard — that there were people who were friends of his who



EXCLUSIVE

Sandra MALLON
Showbiz Editor

were genuinely shocked and angered by the second life he was leading."

Last September, we were the first to reveal that convicted sadistic killer Dwyer is still registered as an architect in Ireland but now his address on the official register is changed from his native Cork to Co Laois — where he is serving a life sentence in the Midlands Prison for the murder of Ms O'Hara.



CONVICTED MURDERER: Dwyer and (right) his victim Elaine



It was also revealed by us at the time that Dwyer was still registered with the Royal Institute of Architects Ireland.

Celeb architect Dermot (49) revealed he is set for a busy 2023 as he continues filming his hit show, as well as renovating a house in Rathgar, Dublin, for families of cystic fibrosis patients in need of a home from home during long hospital stays.

The first episode of this Room To Improve series will see engaged couple Conor and Amy

renovate a derelict farmhouse in Tullamore, Co Offaly.

Dermot said: "Conor inherited his granny's old farmhouse and what really makes it is the setting. It's down the end of a lane, you go through the trees... As it stood, it was gorgeous and even though there were no windows in it, the place was in rack and ruin."

"My job was not to destroy that feeling."

Conor insisted that the original building keep its charming layout but be totally upgraded and that the extension complement the old farmhouse facade.

To make matters worse, Covid lockdown hit and soldier Conor was sent to Kosovo, leaving Amy with the decision making.

But Dermot said that despite the stresses, they were a "great couple" to work with.

Tight

He also reveals that the series is set to showcase a renovation that was done on a "really tight budget" — and admitted the €6,000 kitchen was his favourite on the series.

And he told how the show will continue to air until 2024.

Dermot said: "There's more in the pipeline."

"We're going to put out four episodes every January. I think people love it in January. The Christmas decorations come down and people start looking at their house. I think people love that kind of show at that time in the year."

"January, people start thinking about the changes they're going to make and they're watching the health cookery shows as well as Operation Transformation. Room To Improve falls into that category. They're drawn to it more than they would be on Christmas Eve."