



**Bridal bash:**  
Roseann Ní  
Chéidigh  
wanted a  
honeymoon  
send-off

# 378 moaners have ruined a night-out for 400,000

## COMMENTARY



by Philip  
Nolan

**W**HAT a debacle. With two of the five Garth Brooks concerts now not going ahead – and the remaining three under threat as the star himself says ‘it’s five shows or none’ – some 400,000 ticketholders are left in limbo.

How did we get here? Quite simply because the laws governing the licensing of concerts are stupid and unworkable. Even a casual bystander can see that for a promoter to assess precisely the demand for tickets to see any act, gigs must be announced before a licence is applied for. The problem, of course, is that the promotion of an unlicensed gig technically is illegal, leaving promoters in something of a bind.

But the blame has to be shared among many of the main players. Mr Aiken says he liaised closely with the city council before announcing the five gigs and never was given to believe that there would be a problem with licences. If that is true, then he should tell us exactly who he spoke to, what they said, and on what authority they acted. It is one thing for a promoter to act unilaterally only to find himself scuppered, but quite another to have been given to understand that everything was fine.

We also know that the council acted on foot of 378 complaints from people living in the vicinity of Croke Park. That seems a very small number. Assuming that sound from the gig would carry three kilometres on a still summer night, how many live in the nine square kilometres affected?

My guess is many, many thousands, the overwhelming majority of whom appear not to have been sufficiently exercised to protest.

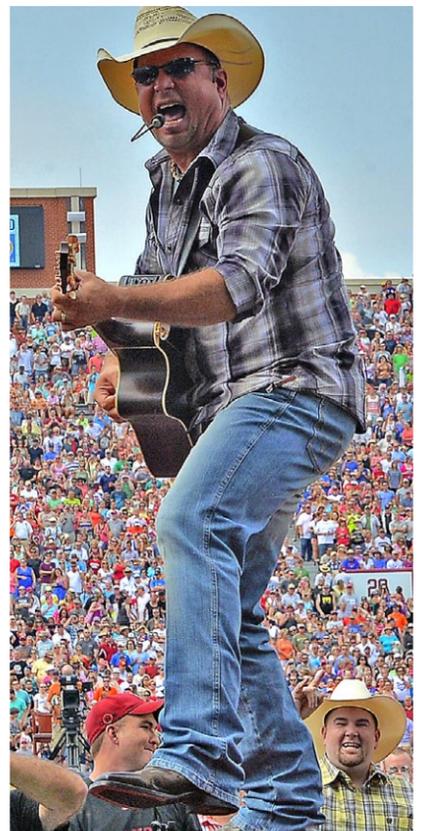
That leaves the people living in houses on the approach routes, who do indeed have a case that being besieged by 80,000 fans a time for five consecutive nights would be disruptive. That, however, is all it is – disruptive. As I wrote earlier this week, it is not as if Croke Park suddenly was magicked up from nowhere.

There has been a recognisable stadium on the site since the Twenties, and the all-time attendance record was set not since the new 82,300-capacity stadium was completed but in 1961 when Offaly played Down before 90,556 spectators.

In short, it always has hosted massive crowds, precisely what you would expect of the nearest thing we have to a national stadium.

There are many benefits to living in a capital city, such as access to public transport, to a wide array of shops and restaurants, to municipal parks and, in the case of Dublin, public beaches and all the amenities the bay has to offer.

But these do not belong to Dubliners alone. Everyone in the country owns a slice of the capital and has a right to



**Stadium-filler:** Garth Brooks

visit it for all sorts of reasons – the traditional Christmas shopping on December 8, great sporting occasions and even protests. There have been hundreds of occasions when the residents of the city have been inconvenienced by tractors, taxis and trucks clogging the city centre to make a point about regulation or restriction, and while Dubliners are put out by this, they broadly accept that it goes hand in hand with living close to the centre of power.

**T**HAT acceptance always has been extended to the likes of the Flora Women’s Mini-Marathon and the Dublin City Marathon, which close large tranches of the city on two Bank Holiday Mondays.

Everyone has a stake in the city. Everyone has a right to enjoy it.

What is sad about the cancellation of the Garth Brooks shows is that so many were coming from overseas to sample our capital. Now, instead, they will look on us as incompetent. Their money will go elsewhere just when we actually need it most, and their impression of Dublin will be tainted forever.

The blame game will begin now, and that’s pointless.

Instead, we need new guidelines on planning permission for gigs; a watertight agreement between Croke Park and the residents that all sign up to; and the acceptance that there should be a level of objection – calculated as an agreed percentage of the total number of households in the affected area – that must be reached before the council caves in and deprives 400,000 of the great night out they had planned.

accommodation or transport provider as early as possible to find out what their terms on cancellations and refunds are so you can consider your options,’ the NCA says.

**Q: I booked rail tickets to take me to the Garth Brooks concert. Am I entitled to a refund?**

Iarnród Éireann has already confirmed that customers who booked rail travel to attend any Garth Brooks concerts which are cancelled will be

refunded for their train bookings in full. ‘Customers who booked with us in good faith expecting concerts to take place will not be left out of pocket. We still look forward to bringing thousands of Garth Brooks fans to the remaining concerts.’

**Q: I or my friends and family booked airline flights from abroad. Am I entitled to a refund?**

The vast majority of airline tickets are non-refundable, said Mr Jewell. He said it

was unlikely travel insurance would cover the cost of cancelled flights, as the claim would be made over a cancelled concert.

**Q: I made bookings with a tour operator for tickets, flights and accommodation as part of a package. Am I entitled to a refund?**

The NCA has stated that concert tickets purchased as the main part of an inclusive package must be either refunded or replaced.

Garth Brooks fan. So before their honeymoon, she and her fiancé had arranged to join a group of close friends at Croke on Monday, July 28.

‘We had everything planned and it was to be the perfect end to our big weekend before we leave on honeymoon on Tuesday,’ she said.

‘It’s a lot of cost over a very expensive weekend and it’s just so disappointing that it is not now going to happen.’

‘I don’t think there is anything we can do about it now.’

Meanwhile, another fan says she too has been left out of pocket as

she had planned to travel from England for the concert.

Tracy Burgin from Cornwall says she has spent almost £1,000 on her tickets, and she is disgusted with how the organisers have dealt with the situation.

‘We have spent a lot of money on this weekend,’ she said.

‘It would have been our first visit to Ireland. I think they should act very quickly and address this with a statement. It is not fair for people who have flights and accommodation booked.’

‘We have flights booked from Exeter in the UK to Dublin. Our

hotel wasn’t cheap either – we were to be staying at the Fitzwilliam Hotel. I’m obviously very unhappy.’

Deirdre Lawless, a Garth Brooks fanatic from Co. Meath, was so determined to be there for the last night of the Dublin tour that as each new date was released, she booked a ticket.

The 36-year-old, who works in a jewellery shop in Dublin, says she spent €67 plus the booking fee on her tickets for each of the five nights. She eventually sold three of the tickets but kept two others – one for the Friday night and one for the Tuesday.

Ms Lawless said yesterday: I live in Dublin so I didn’t have any added costs after the ticket, but prices in Dublin are crazy so I imagine there’s people in a lot worse situations.

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**NOT ALL RESIDENTS ARE OPPOSED  
THE MAN WHO RUINED EVERYTHING** SEE PAGE 8  
SEE PAGE 16