



Starring role for 'Made In Cork' productions at 2012 festival

By GARETH NAUGHTON

AS ALWAYS, there is a strong Cork presence throughout the festival, particularly in the short film strand where local film-makers will be featured in three separate programmes.

In fact, when asked what struck him most about the array of short films screening this year, festival director Mick Hannigan said it was the home-produced stuff that impressed him most.

"That is not just battling for the home team, I genuinely mean it. We expanded 'Made in Cork' to three programmes last year because of the high quality and we have retained that this time around," he said.

"If you look at the 'Made in Cork' programmes, you have dramas; period dramas; experimental pieces; a dance piece; comedy and there is a fabulous animation. Right across the board, in terms of the different genres, the 'Made in Cork' programme is very strong."

'Made in Cork' will screen early on in the festival at the Gate from Monday, November 12, to Wednesday, November 14, and it always prove popular with festival-goers so it is best to get your ticket early if you can.

Hannigan says that the festival helps to focus minds in terms of providing a timeframe for wrapping up projects but he credits technological advancement and local funding support for the strong film-making community in Cork.

"What is happening is that there are people committed to working in film and new technologies, cheaper cameras and home editing suites have brought down the cost of filming considerably which means it is possible for people to live in Cork city and to continue to make films. They don't have to go to Dublin, London or further afield. There is also an increasing range of supports for young or emerging filmmakers through Cork Film Centre, Southern Screen Professionals, the Cork Screen Commission and if you look through the credits of some of the films, they were supported by Cork County Council, etc. So there are local funders supporting them and that is commendable," he said.

One of the more intriguing Cork films in the festival will be Declan O'Connell's *161 Days: The Vita Cortex Workers Struggle* (pictured above, Gate, November 12) which follows the highly emotive protest which concluded in December of last year.

"It is very vibrant, fly-on-the-wall stuff about the occupation and then testimony of people like Paul McGrath and Christy Moore who supported the campaign. It was an emotive campaign which the workers won in the end. It is to Declan O'Connell's credit that he got in there at an early stage with his camera," said Hannigan.

Also of interest should be *Pilgrim Hill* (pictured below, Gate, November 17) filmed on a minuscule budget across the county border in Kerry which has proven to be a hit on the festival circuit.



Keepin' it short



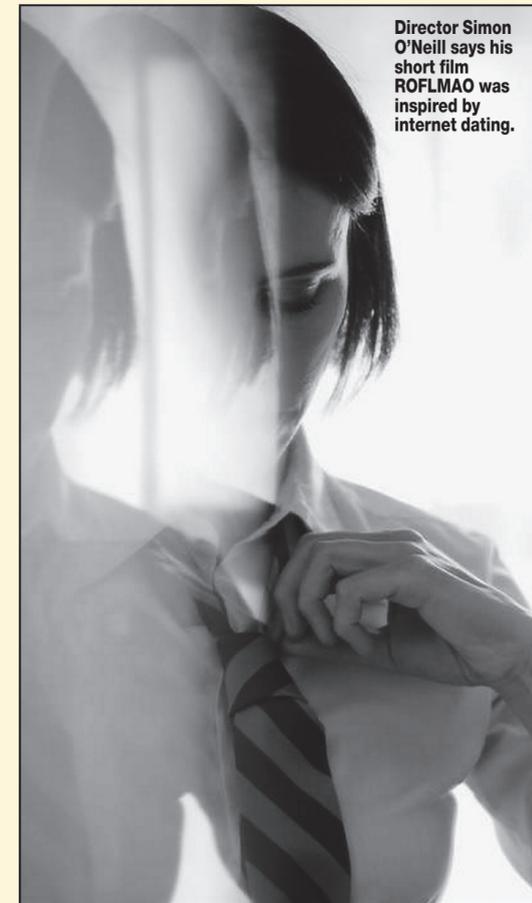
A still from Damien O'Connor's short animation *After You*.



Australian short film *Tethered*.



The L Train by Anna Musso.



Director Simon O'Neill says his short film *ROFLMAO* was inspired by internet dating.

Robert O'Shea looks forward to the short films at this year's Corona Cork Film Festival and speaks with several directors about the difficulties involved in making short films and getting them seen by a wider audience

FINDING and gaining access to a church was a hard slog because as soon as you start asking for permission to hang a man with a severed foot in mid-air by the wrists, they start to ask about insurance."

So says Daniel O'Connell about what he reckons was the hardest part of making his short film *Twinkle Toes* — one of two (the other is *A Selfless Act*) he will be showing at the film festival.

Daniel, from Hollyhill, began making short films six years ago when his girlfriend at the time (now his wife) got a digital camcorder.

"I started messing around and eventually got my nieces and nephews to act for me. I thought I had better get to know some real film-makers and learn from them, so I started up an online film-making forum called Egomotion, net and put out a call to Cork for film-makers and actors to join up. And they did — 300 of them and counting.

"Now my closest friends are all film-makers. We help each other make films that get better every time."

The group will host a Cork Film Fest Fringe event in The Pavilion on Tuesday next at 9pm.

At the festival, short movies have always been given as much prominence as the longer formats and this year is no different, with more than 100 film-makers presenting shorts.

The celebration of shorts could be said to be Cork's unique selling point yet many of these shows are only half-full, while gala events showing

movies bound for the multiplexes in a fortnight's time are sold out.

We asked the directors themselves for reasons to go see short movies and the consensus was that with, on average, eight shorts per screening, even if the one you're watching is rubbish, there's another one coming fairly soon that is bound to be brilliant.

Dub director CJ Scuffins (director of *The Blow-Ins*) says that while it is good to see RTE's *Screen Scene* getting

shorts out to the masses on late-night TV, he would love production companies to show shorts before feature films at the cinema.

"This would work well since cinema-going is becoming more of a special night out, due to the explosion in home entertainment and divorced people getting back on the dating scene!" he jokes.

"I don't think audiences would mind another 10 minutes of film. Even more bang for their buck, so to speak."

Anna Musso from Chicago, who worked as a director's assistant on George Clooney film *The Descendants* and TV show *Hung*, sends *L Train* to the festival and quotes her countryman Mark Twain as a reason to enjoy short movies

"He once said: 'I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead.' People should watch short films because art is the constant search for economy and because there is great power in distillation."

Shorts must be succinct, direct and gripping. One simple idea works best, but where do film-makers get their ideas from?

Simon O'Neill, who has worked on RTE's *Naked Camera*, and directs *ROFLMAO*, says he was inspired by a few internet dates: "You are meeting someone you feel you know but it is an online persona you have been dealing with. Mutual attraction can be instant or completely, disappointingly, absent. I wanted to examine a small story that illustrated this new and potentially combustible addition to our lives."

After Damien O'Connor received the urn of a distant relative with no close family into his house, he struck on his idea.

"Apparently it costs a lot to house the urn in a graveyard so another relative emptied the ashes into a Tesco bag and buried them in the family plot under the cover of darkness. That left the urn. No one wanted it so I eventually took it into my house.

"Over time, the urn ended up holding a door open. It occurred to me I knew nothing about the distant relative and they could have been a doorman when alive. I guess it was a mixture of guilt and amusement that someone could feasibly hold a door

open all their life, only to end up doing it after death that lead to me writing *After You*."

Although shorts are less time-consuming and made for a fraction of the costs of features, there will always be predicaments to overcome.

Aussie Craig Irvin found the most difficult thing about making *Tethered* was the location he chose.

"We shot in a working abattoir for three days and there were a few times I looked over at the cinematographer and he was a weird green colour. The whole crew even made an impromptu dash for fresh air on the first day."

Editing, begging for equipment and feeding crew and cast with sandwiches filled with Tesco Value cheese were commonly cited as the greatest difficulties, but Shane Twomey says the hardest part of directing *Claustrophobia* was trying to bring his concept to life without losing his own by falling through broken floorboards on location.

That and "directing the maggots was pretty tough going." (We guess he means the wriggly larvae that appear in the film and not his actors!)

Paddy's film tells of one desperate Cork mum's deal with IRA

By ROBERT O'SHEA

THE film festival rolls its reels into town for the 57th time this Sunday and plans to stay all week. It's got movies you'll never see at the multiplex, short films you'll only catch between ad breaks on late-night TV and, best of all, documentaries by the bucketload.

Paddy Hayes' *Am An Gháthair* (*Times of Trouble*) hits the big screen on Sunday (4.30pm at the Gate), somewhat fittingly a day after the nation goes to the polls for the Children's Referendum.

His story reveals an extraordinary episode in the life of Josephine Brown, who was a secretary at Cork's Victoria (now Collins) Barracks in 1919 and agreed to spy for the IRA on the condition that they kidnap her eldest son, Reggie, from her in-laws in the UK and return him to her on Leaside.

"She had returned to Cork with her youngest son Gerald — who was only a baby — when her husband enlisted in World War One," explained director Paddy earlier this week.

Reggie was to stay temporarily in Wales with her husband's parents. "When her husband died at the front in France, she tried to get her child back but his family simply refused," explained Paddy.

She went to Bishop Cohan (Bishop of Cork at the time) and he advised her to take a custody battle but the British justice system ruled against her.

"They resorted to putting the four-year-old on the stand and asking him who he wanted to stay with. Having spent the years of legal wrangling with his grandparents, he was bound to opt for them over a mother he now barely remembered," says Paddy who credits Glasheen woman Ciara Nic Chormaic, his producer, with hearing the story first.

"It was like a *Ripley's: Believe it or Not*, because at first we found it hard to believe there was such an amazing story out there and no one had done anything with it before! We seriously considered making it a feature film of it, because it blows something like *Michael Collins* out of the water for me. I've never come across a better story in 10 years of making films."

The IRA intelligence officer in the city, Florrie O'Donoghue, needed spies in the British administration in 1919, so he could wage an intelligence war in the city.

"When they met, Josephine knew she had a bargaining position, but would have to convince the IRA to abduct a child in a foreign jurisdiction," said Paddy.

What ensued was a high-stakes game between spy and spymaster, with plenty of daring escapades and romance for good measure. To find out exactly what happened, you'll just have to go see it. But if you cannot make it to the big screening, it will also be on TG4 on Wednesday night.

Hayes also has in the festival a short film about Francie McGuigan, the first person to escape from Long Kesh — dressed as a priest — in 1971 after being beaten, tortured and interned without trial. *The Hood & Collar*, which was filmed in Camden Fort outside Crosshaven, shows in the Opera House at 6.30pm on November 15.

Am An Gháthair is part of a double bill with another documentary chronicling child abduction, this time in modern warfare, from Kerrywoman Gerry O'Sullivan (who is a mediator and consultant in conflict resolution based in Tralee). *Stolen Children, Stolen Lives* describes the arrests, imprisonment and abuses of Palestinian children aged between nine and 15 by the Israeli military, the impact on them and the impact on Israeli soldiers.

Rise and fall of BritPop rebel Luke

NIALL McCANN's addition to the documentary bucket is a 70-minute profile of the man who, it is claimed, launched BritPop — and then almost immediately jumped ship.

Luke Haines has been hailed as one of England's great singer-songwriters, yet his briefest brush with true fame was when his band *The Auteurs* lost the 1993 Mercury Music Prize to *Suede*.

Irish Times music writer Tony Clayton-Lea has called McCann's *Art Will Save the World* (showing on Wednesday at 8.30pm in the Triskel) "one of the best Irish films — about anything — I've seen in a long, long time."

Haines claims BritPop was a "small-time media invention" that he doesn't believe existed, although that didn't stop him naming his 2009 memoir *Bad Vibes: BritPop And My Part In Its Downfall*.

Haines rages against the phenomenon, and those musicians he considers of lesser creative stature, which is most of them. He was in a 1996 *Select Magazine* feature about reactions to *The Stone Roses*' second album and was pictured removing a copy of *The Second Coming* from an oven, burned to a crisp.

"On 1990s' music, he says: 'I don't listen to any. Didn't then, don't now. I always wanted *The Auteurs* to be apart from everything. I got annoyed if band members socialised with those from other bands.'"

Author David Peace (of *The Damned United* fame) appears as a talking head in the documentary, as does Jarvis Cocker, lead singer with *Pulp*. If cantankerous, caustic humour about the last great era of the British music scene — before it was bombarded by *Coldplay* and *X-Factor* — is your thing, get to the Triskel next Wednesday.

Other music documentaries on show are over the week are *Punk in Africa*, *Sound it Out* and *My Father And The Man In Black*.