

FILM WEST

July 1994

£1

no. 18



• THE IRISH CONDITION

interview with **Louis Marcus**

- **Hal Hartley profile**
- **interview with Chris O'Grady**
- **Denis Potter**
- **in the name of the father in america**



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The contents of Film West do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or the Board of Directors.

Editorial

The Irish Times, Tuesday, 5 July 1994

(At the Synge Summer School):

'An Independent film producer, Ms Katie McGuinness, spoke about the healthy climate for film in Ireland [...] Nevertheless, she admitted she saw a bias towards what she called "hairy" productions from the West of Ireland. She detected a feeling that a certain group of film-makers from that part of the country had struggled through lean times and now deserved their reward. This she said was an approach to funding which she could not endorse'.

Dictionary definition of 'hairy'; (a) covered with hair; consisting of or resembling hair; (coll) difficult, exciting or dangerous.

When asked for a comment Rod Stoneman, CEO of An Bord Scannán said 'Obviously one is always interested in erudite reflections that go on in an academic school on Synge, but for the record the Film Board favours neither hirsute producers on the west coast or recently arrived film producers on the east coast'.

Is bitterness creeping into the Irish Film Industry? — Well it wouldn't be the Irish Film Industry if it wasn't. Of late a large portion of time spent by the individuals working in film in Ireland seems to be wasted looking west and east of the Shannon. It's great to see the Film Board questioned in such an open and public manner (in a country prone to petty murmurings behind closed doors and pint glasses) but does Ms McGuinness honestly believe that the West is favoured over Dublin — and where is this never-never-land, the west, actually situated. Does it include Cork, Tipperary, Donegal, Wexford?

This might be a topic which we will return to in future issues of Film West—but I sincerely doubt it.



• Robert Burke and Bill Sage in Hal Hartley's *SIMPLE MEN*. See page 8

Enquiries: Film West, Galway Film Centre,
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Film Board Shorts

News emanating from Bord Scannán na hÉiríann seems to suggest that film-makers who are interested in making a short film should start writing immediately. The official announcement will be made a mere two months before the closing date for applications. A total of six half-hour contemporary Irish dramas will be funded and the likely closing date for submissions will be September. The money for each individual project will be quiet substantial and will be in tandem with RTE. As for terms of distribution and returns of these films, An Bord Scannán, RTE and the independent film-maker will retain 1/3 each. These awards will not be loans and it is expected that minimal levels of fees will be paid to each employee on the film. Could this be the end of no budget shorts?

Cork Film and Video Network

A group of film-makers and film enthusiasts are now getting together in an attempt to set up a film and video resource centre in Cork. They would like to establish contacts and get in touch with other organisations and anybody interested in getting involved. Furthermore, they would be very grateful for any advice, information and support at this stage. Contact: Helen Guerin, o/o Cork Film Festival, Hatfield House, Tobin Street, Cork. Tel: (021) 271711. Fax: 275945

Film Action Plan

The Film Action Plan '95 standing committee has met regularly this year, and to date three projects have come before them for sanction. The committee consists of six representatives - three of film union SIPTU, and one each from film-makers' organisations Film Base, Film Makers Ireland and Galway Film Centre. The purpose of the scheme, which is a successor to the old Special

Projects, is to promote the development of indigenous Irish film industry by recognising that it will be sometimes necessary to facilitate feature-type production on limited resources. A key to the committee's approval is the extent to which it will employ Irish skills. Thus the creative line should be entirely Irish and all potential crew should be SIPTU members. The committee does recognise the additional difficulties facing producers outside Dublin. The committee makes a recommendation which is then passed to SIPTU for final sanction. If successful, the producer can negotiate special terms such as deferred fees, flexible grades etc. with SIPTU. These variations in custom and practice will be measured against the benchmark FMI/SIPTU film production agreement which governs fully-funded features.

So far, submissions have tended to be very late, making the committee's work more difficult, but hopefully these are teething problems. If you're thinking of producing a film, and think you may be eligible under the plan, the best thing to do is to speak to the GFC representative and approach the committee as early as possible. Full written guidelines are available and, the clearer the submission, the better chance there is of a speedy decision. Remember the committee is there to help, not hinder, Irish film-making.

Film Base News

Video Documentary Course: The principle aim of this course is to provide an overview of the process of documentary production. Discussing elements of film, style, ethics and subjectivity. Working in a team situation, groups of approximately 5 people will produce 4 short documentaries on a 5 VHS format. The course runs for 7 consecutive weekends, commencing Saturday 13th August. Application Deadline Tuesday 26th July. Cost £250 (waged) £200 (part-time) £160 (unwaged)

Seminar - James Flynn: On Saturday 23rd July Film Base will be holding a half day seminar in the IFC meeting room from 10-2 pm. The Film Board's business manager James Flynn will be speaking on

procedures for funding for feature length drama and documentary projects. **New Board Changes:** Bernice O'Donoghue was elected as chairperson of the Film Base Board. Liam O'Neill is now Vice Chairperson.

Film Base Shorts

All three winners from the first round of awards for '94, Pteranodon, Niamh & The Angels and Waterweed, go into production on late July/early August. The deadline for the latest round of awards was Friday 8th July.



Hofnaflús

Is comhlucht neamhspleách Teilifíse í Hofnaflús Teo atá in gCasla Conamara agus atá ag cur críoch le sraith cláracha 'Scéal Dhá Chistin/ A Tale of Two Kitchens' (26 x 5 noiméad) do RTE agus BBC Northern Ireland.

Since its establishment in 1991, Hofnaflús Teo with the assistance of Údarás na Gaeltachta has been working on developing original animation concepts for children's TV. Today the company is completely equipped with Digital/analogue mix, but however the next twelve months will see an investment programme which Hofnaflús is currently undergoing and see the company becoming the first wholly digital company in the country.

After the attendance at MIPTV '94 in Cannes, the company are now working on double shifts in order to extend their production capacity in line with demand from foreign markets. This move to extend production capacity comes at a time when the company is preparing for new contracts and will also expand into the field of corporate video production. The company is also working on documentary projects, one of which has already been shown on RTE and more projects which are currently at research and development stage.

Hofnaflús Teo was also recently nominated for the 'Up

and Running '94' awards and was subsequently chosen as one of three companies to represent the Western Region on RTE.

Hofnaflús Teo can be contacted at Unit 2, Estát Tionscalochta, Casla, Co. na Gaillimhe. Phone/Fax 091-72550 (Brid Joyce).

1994 Galway Film Fleadh

The renowned Galway Film Fleadh runs into its sixth year with an exciting and diverse line up. Running from July 13th - 18th, over 100 films will be screened in the Claddagh Palace Cinema, including International First Features, New Releases, Irish and European Retrospectives, Documentaries and Animations.

Controversial film director Ken Loach, 1960's pop queen turned actress Marianne Faithful and frequent Fleadh visitor Marianne Sagebrecht are among the movie greats who will be sauntering around the Claddagh Palace marquee during the event.

This year's theme of freedom and resistance runs through many of the screenings including the Indian film, *Phoolan-Devi* about a female bandit, and the gripping documentary, *Profession neo-Nazi* which looks at the most dangerous ideologist in Germany's neo-Nazi scene.

The world premiere of *Moondance*, starring Ruadhri Conroy (*Into The West*) and Marianne Faithful will be screened as the opening feature. Other New Irish Features include: Joe Comerford's *High Boot Benny* with Alan Devlin and Frances Tomelty, Maurice O'Callaghan's *Broken Harvest*, and Paddy Breathnach's *Aísa and The Bishop's Story* starring Donal McCann.

This year's Fleadh Tribute is to British film-maker Ken Loach, whose films about working class lives took on controversial issues unpopular with the establishment. Among his works to be screened are *Cathy Come Home*, his poignant film on homelessness, and more recent movies: *Raining Stones* and *Ladybird, Ladybird*.

Among the New International Releases which can be seen are *Sirens* starring Hugh Grant and Tara Fitzgerald; John Dahl's *The Last Seduction*; the comedy-thriller *Romeo Is*



Bleeding; the Australian winner *Muriel's Wedding* and *Mana Must Die*, starring Marianne Sägebrecht.

Documentaries include *Sheriff Street Kids*, a look at Sheriff Street kids and their racing pigeons; *War Room* about Bill Clinton's presidential campaign; *The Heart of the Matter* about women and AIDS; and *Night and Fog* and *Liberation from Rosenstrasse* which both deal with the Holocaust.

Also at the festival will be discussions on GATT and its threat to indigenous film-makers, talks on *Teilifis na Gaeilge* and a feast of New Irish Shorts.

The 1994 Galway Film Fleadh's impressive line-up will attract movie greats, film buffs, star spotters, fame seekers and groupies, which should make for another happening festival and an unmissable one at that.

Help Wanted

'The Arrival' is a short film being produced in Galway about a search for the maker of a killer disease. The film's Producer, John Fitzsimons, said that he wants to combine the elements of the horror and thriller genres so that a straightforward story is twisted to reveal a political message.

John works at Exeter College as a lecturer in Media Studies. This will be his third visit to Galway to make a film. Three years ago he produced 'The Claddagh Ring' a story of myth and mystery set mainly in the Burren area and in Louisburgh, near Westport, and last year he produced a documentary on Galway. Both programmes have been broadcast on the Eutelsat European Satellite, and have received numerous public showings in the UK.

All the films are produced with assistance from John's students, who mainly study A-levels before going on to University. He always involves local people in the productions and would be very interested to hear from anyone wishing to participate in productions, either now or in the future. He can be contacted at Exeter College, Hele Rd., Exeter, Devon EX4 7AA, England.

Tel: 0392 4006. Filming for 'The Arrival' begins on June 30th.

RTÉ Independent Commissions

RTE's Independent Productions Unit is commencing

commissions for 1995. A number of commissioning rounds are planned. With the increase in volume of commissions resulting from the rise in the budget for independent productions from £5,000,000 in 1994 to £6,500,000 in 1995, submissions are being split into categories for consideration across two major commissioning rounds. Programme categories not being considered in this first round will be considered at the second round planned for late September 1994. A third, small mop-up round will be held in early 1995.

The Independent Productions Unit has set itself the target of processing submissions in a 12 week period from the closing date of receipt of submissions, to assist the IPU in the speedy assessment of proposals. Producers are requested to present proposals as clearly and concisely as possible.

Proposals are sought in the following areas:

1. Features/Lifestyle Programming
2. Video Diaries.
3. Hospital
4. The Famine
5. Authored Documentary Series
6. One-off Documentaries
7. Drama.

As the National Broadcaster, RTE has, as a stated priority, the sourcing of programmes from all regions of the country, and the reflection in its programming of life in the regions. Producers should take account of this in their submissions.

More detailed briefing

documents are available on all of the above programming areas from the Independent Productions Unit.

Deadline for receipt of submissions is 12/8/1994 except for drama which is 16/9/1994.

Waterford News

Waterford film-lovers will get a major boost in September when South East Media Arts (SEMA) opens Ireland's first regional 35mm art-house cinema, Screenspace, at Garter Lane Arts Centre.

"It started off as a little 25 seater videotheque", explains SEMA director Mike Collins, "the audiences loved the films, but wanted to see them properly projected, 35mm projection was the only way to go!"

The 120 seat venue will have a policy of showing good Irish shorts and features, next to the type of films previously only released in the IFC or Lighthouse in Dublin.

SEMA is also running a wide range of short courses this summer and autumn, with subjects ranging from music video production to screenwriting. Details on these, as well as film-related information and advice are available from Mike Collins or Marie-Louise Byrne at SEMA, Garter Lane Arts Centre, Waterford 051-55038.

On the Community Television front, Waterford Access Media (WAM) ran the first Irish community TV simulcast through Cablelink Waterford and WLR-FM on June

Dear Ed,

Three Cheers for the Great Conspiracy Theory! What in heaven's name is going on here? Has Film West lost its marbles? This reader was happily reading through your last issue until I came across an article which I can confidently say is the greatest load of nonsense I have read in quite some time. Mr Ó hEallaithe's article on "Gaeiltacht Teilifis Activists Excluded from the New Comhairle" read like the ultimate in "Us & Them" paranoia. Give me a break! Is it not time for those of us who are supporters of TNG to air our views and perhaps focus on the positive developments that have taken place with regard to the establishment of an Irish language television service? I, for one, am sick of this ranting. I am tired of this constant whining in the apparent name of TNG supporters. In my estimation, the theory propagated by Mr. Ó hEallaithe would be unrepresentative of many

Letter to the Editor

people's attitudes to *Teilifis na Gaeilge*. If the writer speaks in his own name, fair enough, but I certainly did not nominate a spokesperson on behalf of the *Gaeiltacht* and matters related to TNG.

I myself hail from Corca Dhuibhne (or the West Kerry *Gaeiltacht*). I am a native speaker or "cainteoir ó dhúchais" and I happen to love the Irish language for what it means to me and my cultural identity. I look forward to the wealth of stories we can tell and the newfound access to the airwaves all Irish language speakers and learners will have to a full schedule of professional, high quality, informative, entertaining programming 'as Gaoluinn' on TNG.

No, I was not out in Rosmuc in 1987 but does this mean that I, as a *gaeiltacht* person, am somehow not 'really' an

activist or supporter? I believe and I have always believed that Meitheal Oibre *Teilifis na Gaeiltachta* was a powerful catalyst in the 'campaign' to establish an Irish language television service because it represented the grassroots. Though it may not have had a popular mandate, it is fair to say that Meitheal expresses the concerns of some of those for whom Irish is still a real vernacular. However, I do not subscribe to the theory or the inference in the article, that without those who participated in the 1987 campaign on the *Comhairle* we will never be saved from this shroud of 'secrecy' and RTE monopoly and the contamination of 'Dublin *Gaeilgóiri*'. I find this conceited notion more than mildly infuriating and bordering on offensive. Try and inject some balance in your coverage of the subject and give us all a break.

Le gach dea ghruí,
Dairena Ni Chinnéide

2nd. The hour-long programme, **MAYDAY SARAJEVO**, featured highlights from a benefit concert organised by **WAM**, which raised nearly £2,000 for Bosnian relief charities. **WAM** volunteers, supported by **SEMA**, are currently working on more productions, buoyed up by the news that the EU-funded **PETRA** Youth Initiatives Programme has granted funds for video equipment and pilot TV programmes. **WAM** can be contacted through **SEMA** and pilot TV programmes.

WAM can be contacted at 051-55038

Film West

Miriam Allen, a Director of Galway Film Centre, worked voluntarily as Editor of *Film West* magazine for many years. *Film West* would like to take this opportunity to thank Miriam for her tireless work and creative input throughout the years.

Telegael

Established in 1989, Telegael was the first major television facilities company in Ireland to operate outside the greater Dublin and Belfast metropolitan areas. Telegael provides a wide range of independent production and post production facilities including the provision of filming crews, non-linear editing on **AVID**, **Beta SP** online editing, digital audio post production, dialogue replacement as well as a dedicated subtitling facility for teletext and on-screen subtitling.

Telegael was the first Irish facility to install the **AMS AudioFile** disk-based sound editing facility and has recently established a second audio post production studio using a 16 channel **AudioFile** configured with a **Logic 3** digital mixing system with full automation. This studio has been fully booked up since it became operational during November of last year.

The combination of **AVID**, **AudioFile** and **Logic 3** at Telegael adds up to a powerful post production solution. Time in the online suite is reduced substantially as all audio editing, tracklaying and postsynching work carried out digitally during the **AVID** and sound dubbing stages. Having

video and audio post production facilities inhouse enables Telegael to fully integrate and streamline the post production process from shot listing to layback of soundtrack. This allows clients more time and flexibility to explore different programme options as well as the opportunity to achieve substantial financial savings in post production budgets.

Telegael welcomes any visitors to Galway to visit their premises and view the facilities available.

For further information please contact Paul or Orla at 091-83460.

Wexford Film Commission

Wexford Film Commission has been established and a Limited Company is at present being formed. The Commission consists of a group of eight members, including representatives of Wexford Corporation, Wexford County Council, Trade Union interests and Commercial interests. The primary aims of the Wexford Film Commission are to promote County Wexford as a potential location for film-making. To this end, it is intended that they would link into the international marketing strategies of the **IDA** and **An Bord Trachtála** and would also link directly into the newly re-established **Irish Film Board**. As a medium-term goal, the Commission wish to establish in County Wexford a film industry training and educational system to cater for such needs as may be required in the future. This goal would obviously be the subject of further discussion with the appropriate Government Agencies and the **Irish Film Board**.

The Commission will produce a professional brochure on the potential of County Wexford as a filming location. This brochure will be made available to the Irish international marketing agencies and to the indigenous film industry and will be promoted abroad. Members of the Board of the Wexford Film Commission will also be available for discussion or promotion where appropriate.

Film Fleadh Workshops

To coincide with the strong programme of documentaries the Galway Film Fleadh are showing this July, the Galway Film Centre has planned a number of workshops concentrating on Irish documentary.

There are three workshops in all, and they all take place in the Ardilaun Hotel, between 11.30am and 1.30 pm.

Workshop A is entitled 'Documentary in Ireland' and takes place on Wednesday, July 13th. The lecturer is Louis Marcus, who will talk about his recent series, 'The Irish Condition' and about Irish documentary in general. The workshop will be illustrated with clips from a variety of ground-breaking Irish documentaries and a questions and answers session will bring proceedings to a close.

Workshop B takes place on the Thursday, and is entitled 'Politics and Documentary'. This workshop is given by Mary Holland and Michael Whyte, who will be discussing their two collaborations: 'Creggan' (1979) which won a **Prix Italia** for Best Documentary, and its sister piece, 'Shankhill' (1994). Both documentaries are to be screened on Channel 4 on July 5th and 7th, and Mary and Michael will be discussing the difficulties involved in covering the political landscape in Northern Ireland and approaches to political documentaries in general.

Workshop C takes place on Friday 15th and is entitled 'Personalising the Documentary'. The lecturer is John T Davis and will cover John's own experiences working in the independent sector, from the ground-breaking 'Shellshock Rock' up through 'Route 66', 'Dust on the Bible', 'Power in the Blood' and his new film, currently in production, 'The Uncle Jack'.

The cost for each workshop is £20.00 waged and £15.00 unwaged and places are limited to thirty people per workshop. They are primarily geared towards people either working in the field or hoping to break into the field and all the lecturers are prepared to offer the benefit of their experience to those with a genuine interest. For further information please contact Nicky Fennell at the Centre.



Slán Dairena!

Dairena Ni Chinnéide, who has worked in the Galway Media Antenna for the two years since its initiation has decided that she wants to take up a different challenge and work at something less administrative and more creative.

Dairena has helped create a substantial data-base of production companies in the West. Much of her job concentrated in organising seminars and workshops, initiatives which have been of immense benefit to producers and film-makers alike. Darina believes "that it is important that companies in the West have all the information available, at their doorstep." She has succeeded in Bringing the 'European' mountain to Mohammed'. She hopes the Antenna goes from strength to strength and will stay on for two months to help her replacement settle in and to ensure continuity of commitment.

Dairena has had considerable experience in a variety of fields. After graduating from DCU, she worked as a freelance journalist for RTE, The Irish Times and Century Radio. She was a member of Coiste Bunaithe Teilifíse and is also a Director of Amharclann de Ide and has been very active in the establishment and administration of Réalt.

The Board and Staff of Galway Film Centre wish to sincerely thank Dairena for her tremendous support and commitment to the MEDIA Antenna and the Centre.



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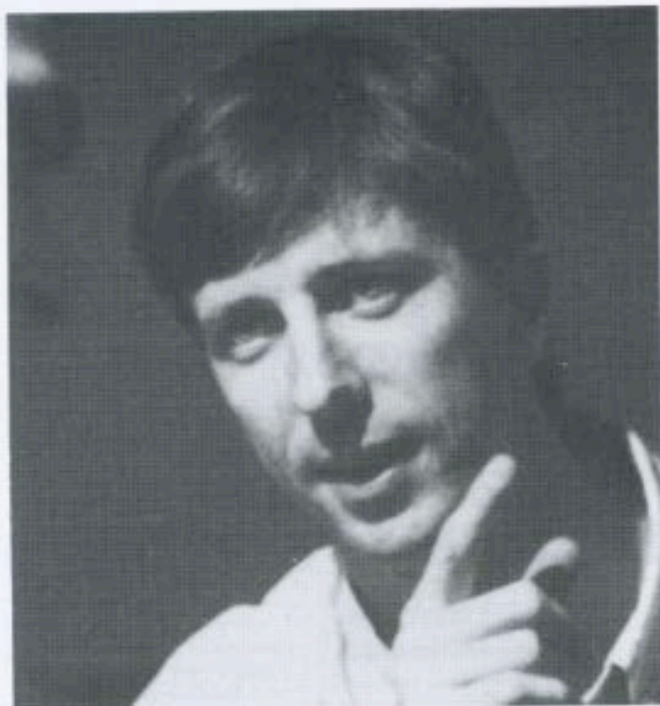
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In the Summer of 1992, the Galway Film Fleadh hosted Ireland's first screening of 'Simple Men', a peculiarly offbeat, stylised film that proved to be the hit of the festival, requiring a hastily organised repeat showing due to unprecedented demand for tickets.

This screening, to which Robert Burke, the male lead in the film, had been invited, presented mainstream Irish audiences with their first opportunity to see the work of arguably the most original, creative and articulate force at work in contemporary American film.

Hal Hartley

profiled by Vincent Browne

Hartley, the writer and director of four feature films and five shorts, has seen appreciation of his quirky, philosophical but curiously comic films grow from an enthusiastic cult following to the point where he has been lauded as the founder of a new cinematic genre, the 'existential comedy of manners'. *Amateur*, his fourth feature in five years which has just premiered in Cannes earlier this year, seems to confirm Hartley's role as the most prolific and interesting independent director in the US, and will probably bring his work, which has enjoyed fanatical cult status, to a more general audience.

The transition has been incredibly rapid. His first feature 'The Unbelievable Truth', released in 1989, began his philosophical conversation with the audience that continues with each new film he produces. "My films" he explains, "are a desperate attempt to make some sense out of my own experience." This debate centres around the value that his characters can extract from the ethics of truth, trust, work and memory set amid the complications of family, duty and desire.

'The Unbelievable Truth', with a budget of only £55,000, explores the developing romance between nuclear-apocalypse obsessive Audrey (Adrienne Shelley) and priestly ex-convict mechanic Josh (Burke). The drama unfolds amid a complex series of

confusions, eager mythologisings and a deal-making father who wants Audrey to pursue a dubious but lucrative modelling career instead of reading literature at costly Harvard. At the climax, the various truths are established and Josh and Audrey tentatively move together—while he admits—that he can't trust anyone and she still hears the "whisper of the bombs just above the clouds". Calling the film "a study of emotional commerce", Hartley thinks it appropriate that it should end this way, saying that their relationship could save things "in a very physical immediate sense but it doesn't make life any easier or less dangerous."

With his next feature, Hartley takes it a step further: "I wanted a love story that didn't gloss over the more difficult implications of commitment and intimacy." 'Trust' (1990), again starring Shelley as Maria, an accidental patricide with an unwanted pregnancy and Matthew (Martin Donovan), a near psychotic electronic genius with a tyrannical and repressed father, is just such a film. It traces the movement of Maria from brat to saint while surviving en route a scheming, vengeful mother, a major fool boyfriend, a lover's leap, a neurotic baby thief and a live grenade to emerge as a figure "that knows she can escape and take responsibility for her own life."

The richly explored female perspective of

'Trust' seemed to represent a kind of conclusion for Hartley as he claims he had, up to that point, been writing about women for over ten years. In 'Simple Men', his biggest budget yet, he attempts to have "the same conversation that 'Trust' was having but placing it rigorously in the male world." The film revolves around the journeyings of two brothers, Denis and Bill, the former trying to find out the truth about his father, the latter attempting to recover from love. Along the way, they hide out from the law in Kate's (Karen Sillas) Bar where they are forced to face issues of truth, desire, misogyny and honesty. At the end, Bill has to choose between freedom and Kate, who refuses to lie in order to save him, reflecting Hartley's notion that "you don't get something for nothing. Ever."

These three films have in many ways broken with the conventions of American cinema, seeking to deal with matters in a searching, philosophical manner more typical of European cinema than the anti-intellectual movies of America. "I feel like I'm a traditional film-maker" he remarks "but the tradition is Brecht, Godard, Warhol." His other influences include Preston Sturges, Wim Wenders and writers James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. His sensibility, however, is truly American.

What really separates Hartley from his contemporaries is the methodology that he applies to his craft and the central role that he plays in his own productions. He is the writer, director, producer, casting director and even composer (Hartley has co-wrote the music on several of his films, using the pseudonym Ned Rifle on the credits in order to avoid appearing a megalomaniac.) His films begin life as a simple observation or question, such as seeing a man on a subway reading a pornographic magazine and wondering "How would he feel if that was his daughter he was looking at?", which was how the story of 'The Unbelievable

Truth' suggested itself. These observations are recorded in notebooks, which are the main sources for his stories. These notebooks he has kept obsessively since discovering that "I graduated from High school and had never read a book." So he began the process of self-education (which Maria exactly replicates in 'Trust'), jotting down references and words he did not understand.

These notebooks are what form the basic questions that the characters are built around. "I write a lot. I have certain key ideas about situations and characters and they evolve out of each other although a lot of 'Trust' existed before 'The Unbelievable Truth'. There were certain ideas that I felt were half finished in the earlier film, things I had discovered in the making of the film and wanted to expand on."

Another defining characteristic of Hartley's methods is his use of the same central group of remarkable actors he has been assembling since his first feature. This group, Robert Burke, Adrienne Shelley, Karen Silas, Martin Donovan and Elina Lowensohn, coupled with the cinematography of Michael Spiller, who has shot all of Hartley's work, explain in part the peculiar emotional impact of the films.



ABOVE: Elina Lowensohn plays Sofia in Hal Hartley's *Amateur*

PREVIOUS PAGE: Hal Hartley on the set of *Amateur*

painters, Hopper, Sargeant and Whistler which give the film so many different blues and greys.

Hartley's newest film, 'Amateur', is the story of Thomas, a gentle sensitive man with amnesia who can't remember that he is a vicious international criminal and Isabelle, a glamorous ex-nun who earns a living writing pornography. Together they try to save Sofia, a naive young porn star, from the ruthless gangsters who are trying to kill her. 'Amateur' is an attempt to take the conventions of a thriller to see how I can bend it. How it works with one flat tyre, if you like." This will be superficially different from his other films, owing to its much bigger budget but he insists that it is "still part of an on-going process of work that I have been developing. The films are all separate stories but my conversation with the audience continues; you can't say everything about relationships in America in one film."

During the making of 'Amateur', a scenario arose that could easily be an out-take from any Hartley film. Michael Spiller, again the man behind the camera, had worked on the Clinton presidency campaign and was asked to photograph a particular oval office address. "I told them 'I can't do it. I'm working with Hal Hartley.'" When you're work outranks that of the President's in its importance, it is probably safe to say that you have arrived.

HAL HARTLEY *filmography*

- 1985 **KID** 33 minute - 16mm colour
- 1986 **THE CARTOGRAPHER'S GIRLFRIEND** 29 minute - 16mm colour
- 1987 **DOGS** 25 minute - produced on 8mm, edited on video
- 1989 **THE UNBELIEVABLE TRUTH** 90 minute - 35mm colour. A Miramax Films Release
- 1990 **TRUST** 105 minutes - 35mm colour
A Fine Line Feature Release
Grand Prize - Houston Film Festival
Best Screenplay - Sundance Film Festival
Best Film - Australian Film Critics Circle
Popularity Vote - Australian Film Critics Circle
Jury's Critics Prize - Deauville Film Festival, France
- 1991 **THEORY OF ACHEVEMENT** 17:45 minute - 16mm colour
New Director's New Films Series - Museum of Modern Art/NY
PBS Alive from Off Centre - Broadcast nationwide '91
- 1991 **AMBITION** 9 minute - 16mm colour
PBS Alive from Off Centre - Broadcast nationwide '91
- 1991 **SURVIVING DESIRE** 57 minute - 16mm colour
American Playhouse - Broadcast nationwide 1992
Winner of Best Actress - Mary Ward - FIPA, Cannes
Official Selection - Input '93 Bristol, England.
- 1992 **SIMPLE MEN** 104 minute - 35. colour
A Fine Line Feature Release
Cannes International Film Festival 1992 - Official Selection Main Competition
Nomination Best Actress - Karen Silas - IFF Spitt Awards
Best Director/Best Film - Ft. Lauderdale Int'l Film Festival
- 1993 **THE ONLY LIVING BOY IN NEW YORK** 4:15 minute music video for "Everything But the Girl"
- 1993 **FLIRT** 24 minute - 35mm colour
- 1993 **FROM A MOTEL** 5:4:07 minute music video for "Yo La Tengo"
- 1993 **RRS** 3:12 minute video for Red Hot "No Alternative Compilator"
- 1994 **AMATEUR** 100 minutes - 35mm colour
Featuring Isabelle Huppert, Martin Donovan, and Elina Lowensohn.

Hartley is very conscious of the way actors can hi-jack a film and ruin its underlying meaning by simply over-acting. During the rehearsal stage, which for him "is just the very furthest stage of writing, where each character I have written on the page actually becomes a real human person". As actors go through their lines, he is constantly reducing, isolating and abandoning superfluous movement and placing emphasis more on gestures, very much in the style of Robert Bresson, to whom he admits he is becoming increasingly influenced by. This non-naturalistic style of acting is reflected in the way that none of his characters smile or display extreme emotion because he believes that it is too easy for audiences to empathise with a pre-constructed block of feelings that are presented and to miss the real drama that is going on underneath. Thus, in 'Trust', the movement from understated anger that Maria's mother presents us with on the death of her husband to the relief and freedom that she is really feeling, and displays later, is much more logical and appropriate.

Another Hartley trademark is the unified look that each of his individual films possesses. This is a kind of organising logic that each scene in the film is subjected to. In 'The Unbelievable Truth' this logic emphasised wide shots, outdoor locations and over-dubbed speeches. For 'Trust', he chose indoor filming with lots of close-up shots behind large colourless spaces, an effect that necessitated greying all the colourful objects by 40%. In 'Simple Men', because it was his first "pastoral film" he chose the works of the great maritime

Chris O'Grady is a Principal Officer in the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht. As there are distinctions between film and television in the Department, Pat Collins confined the questions purely to his brief.

Chris O'Grady

interview

Were you involved in the Braveheart deal?

I was very much involved, yes.

How did it originate?

It started off with an approach from Morgan O'Sullivan of O'Sullivan Ford Productions, in Ardmore Studios and they asked the Minister whether he would be agreeable to a very big budget foreign film coming to Ireland and using some of Section 35 finance. Their interest was two-fold: the use of Section 35 and the use of the Irish army for major crowd scenes. So we said that in principle we were interested but that we would have to ensure that there would be a significant return in terms of employment and value added to the Irish economy. We agreed a figure of ten million pounds that they could raise under Section 35. We negotiated with the Department of Defence who were very helpful and the Office of Public Works securing both the assistance of the Irish army and the availability of the castles that they wanted. We spoke to them in terms of the numbers of Irish actors, Irish extras and significantly, the amount of Irish people on the crew and we got assurances from them on that. We had a comprehensive check-list if you like, of what we wanted to see

coming out of this from the Irish perspective.

How long did it take to put this package together?

The package was developed over three meetings, one of which was with Mel Gibson and his top people from ICON, his company in America. We had a three hour meeting with him in Jury's hotel just to tease out the finer points having initially got an agreement with the Irish negotiator, Morgan O'Sullivan. In case I forget, one of the things that we pushed for was the employment of understudies on the film so we asked that he would take on at least twelve understudies and they agreed to do that. As I understand it, they're not taking on any trainees in Scotland. They're doing 4 weeks in Scotland starting June 6th and they're coming here on July 18th, and including wrap-ups, they'll be here until the end of October. I presume these people will have access to a fair bit of experience.

Could you put any figure on how many Irish will be employed?

We're talking about 250 between actors and crew. Crew would be the main component of that and there will also be significant civilian extras, 1,600 FCA soldiers, significant use of

Irish horses, Irish accommodation, transport, use of Panavision Ireland, use of Irish lighting and sound systems and what not. So it's significant by Irish standards.

But isn't there a danger that too much of the available funds for Section 35 will go towards the "big budget" films?

The Minister's policy has been that there has to be a two pronged approach. One would be that you would obviously give favourable assistance towards indigenous Irish production via both the Film Board and Section 35 but also that you would attract big budget films in here as well, so that Irish technicians and Irish crew would have access to higher level skills.

How did STATCOM originate?

In the report of the lesser known special working group on the film production industry one recommendation was made that we could use Section 16 of the Irish Film Board Act, could enable the Film Board to establish a committee. We decided we'd establish a very senior committee called STATCOM. We asked the Film Board to establish and chair it. Basically, it brings the senior executives of FÁS, RTE, the Arts Council, Bord Fáilte, Bord Tráchtála, the IDA, Údarás na Gaeltachta, and ourselves together, which would remove whatever remaining encumbrances are there in the system. We're in there for the long haul.

What exactly will it do?

STATCOM has been established to ensure that the State sector is mobilised properly and doesn't duplicate and in doing so, it decided it must address a range of priority issues, the first being training. The unmet training requirements of the industry are a priority. The FÁS assessment was launched last month and will be completed by the end of September. It would then be a matter for the Minister to respond to the recommendations from the FÁS assessment and to find the resources to respond.

Anything else?

STATCOM hopes to address such things as distribution of films in this state and also cinema in the regions, which we believe is important.

Most of the films that are produced in Europe don't go



Mr Chris O'Grady, Principal Officer in the Arts and Culture Division of the Department

beyond their own country, only 20% go outside and 80% of films shown in Europe are American. How do you combat that?

I think you combat it by producing films of quality, but you need structures. There are several good European films which have not had access to other markets because of the domination of American companies who distribute their own films to their own cinemas. That sort of cartel has to be addressed. Even here in this city most of the cinemas are American. So that is a real problem. More specifically, you combat it by improving quality, also by accessing and utilising the MEDIA programme which has set out to try and do that by providing support for script writing and screen writing by providing focus training for producers and directors.

Well cinemas are closing down at an alarming rate throughout the country. Is there anything that can be done about this?
Well the short answer to your question is that at the moment Statcom hasn't addressed it properly, we've put it down as a marker for future attention. I think that the only way you can do that is by establishing an

effective distribution network - not by putting money into cinemas because you can't interfere with the private sector in that sense, I mean you couldn't have 'State Cinemas' in Kanturk. But I do think in view of a mechanism that would facilitate the distribution of the films that are coming through the system now and get them to the people who will hopefully watch them. I think that's the vehicle to proceed with and that's what we're going to do.

But how in reality will that work. If you take Galway for instance, there are 9 screens and they're all owned by UCI so how do you get European films into Galway if they're going to be pushed from America.
To be quite honest, I won't spoof you, I don't know but there must be some way of doing it. Statcom will be the vehicle to devise new strategies in this area.

There are some changes in the 1994 Finance Act relating to Section 35?

The Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht will now certify all films that are looking for Section 35 finance and we in this ministry will in the future apply a production test to people seeking Section 35 finance. The Revenue Commissioners will continue to apply the risk test that's involved. With the consent of the Minister for Finance, we will publish guidelines which will give clear indicators to applicants for Section 35 finance.

What are these guidelines?

The guidelines essentially are based on three broad criteria: employment, value added and culture and the latter is very important. We expect the cultural provision will enable us to certify a lot of good Irish. We're talking in terms of applicants giving us a very detailed production target and a production schedule. The production schedule would indicate to us the level of Irish labour proportionable across the different levels of departments, the different skills in the industry both in front of and behind the camera. The extent to which they will use Irish supply houses. The amount of money they will spend on Irish services like accommodation, car hire, truck hire, etc.

But how would you put a value

on culture. How can anyone assess a project's cultural value?

It's a difficult question. To me, culture is the expression of people's stories, whether at the local level or the national level and it follows that Irish people who want to tell a story through the medium of film would, in my mind and the minister's mind, should qualify for Section 35 finance, all things being equal. We won't start sanitising the stories we want told, the stories will be warts and all. With regard to those people who are starting their careers as scriptwriters and who come with a solid budget and a solid team of film makers we would hope to be able to certify them.

Could you tell me something about Eurimages?

Ireland joined Eurimage in September 1992 and Britain joined in April 1993-I think possibly because we joined, as we were the only English language country in Eurimages at the time. So far we've had six applications, five of them have been successful. All the stories are Irish because we found that European co-producers are seeking out Irish producers. I just did a tot this morning for my own Minister's brief, the total amount of Eurimages assistance for the four successful projects (four films, one creative documentary) was 0.8 million punts which is quite significant.

Will they be shot in Ireland?

So far 'Moondance' was shot in Ireland, 'Talk with Angels' in fact doesn't look like it's going to go ahead although it was given money, Bob Quinn's 'A Bishops Story' was shot in Ireland, 'The Disappearance of Finbarr Brennan' will be shot in Ireland and 'Myths, Mysteries and Miracles' which was a creative documentary from Little Bird will be part shot in Ireland.

What exactly does the Board of Eurimages do when they meet?

Basically, each meeting of Eurimages lasts three days. We look at up to thirty film projects. The budget available is 30 million French francs (2.6 m. punts) can be given out at each meeting. Essentially, the Board goes through each project line by line to see whether it should be approved for assistance.

Would just be dealing with the Irish ones?

No, each film is open for discussion. There are twenty eight on the Board of



Michael D. Higgins, T.D., Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht chatting to Peter Ustinov on the set of the Old Curiosity Shop at Ardmore Studios.

Management and you basically talk them through what the film is and what your contacts have been with the Irish producers and whether you think it's good for them to get involved or otherwise.

So if someone is looking for Eurimages funding, they come to you?

No, they go to the Eurimages secretariat but before the meeting they come to me to

brief me on what is required and if I think there are flaws in their application then obviously I would talk to them directly and try and help them to improve their application. It's worked very well so far.

Why is the Rod Stoneman, C.E.O. of the Film Board now the Irish representative to Eurimages?

Because of the level of work in this division at the moment

mainly in the film area that our resources are stretched and we suggested that the Chief Executive of Bord Scannán na hÉireann should be our representative. There's no question of any diminution in our commitment to Eurimages, I can assure you of that.

How much money does Ireland actually give towards Eurimages?

Since we joined we've paid roughly 180,000 punts to Eurimages and if you take that there is 0.8 million coming back to Irish films it's a good deal by any standards. I have to emphasise again that the money won't all go to Ireland, some portion will come to the Irish producers, most of them are majority co-producers so most of the money will come here anyway

What are the developments with the Screen Commission?

The Minister is examining the need for a Film Commission in this state to attract projects from abroad. There is a Welsh, Scottish and English Film Commission and most states in the United States have their own Film Commission but we don't have a structured mechanism, although this department has operated as a Film Commission for 'Braveheart'. We concluded within STATCOM that the IDA would be the appropriate agency so my understanding is that the IDA are favourably considering the idea of a film commission but there's no final decision yet.

Would that be a semi-state body?

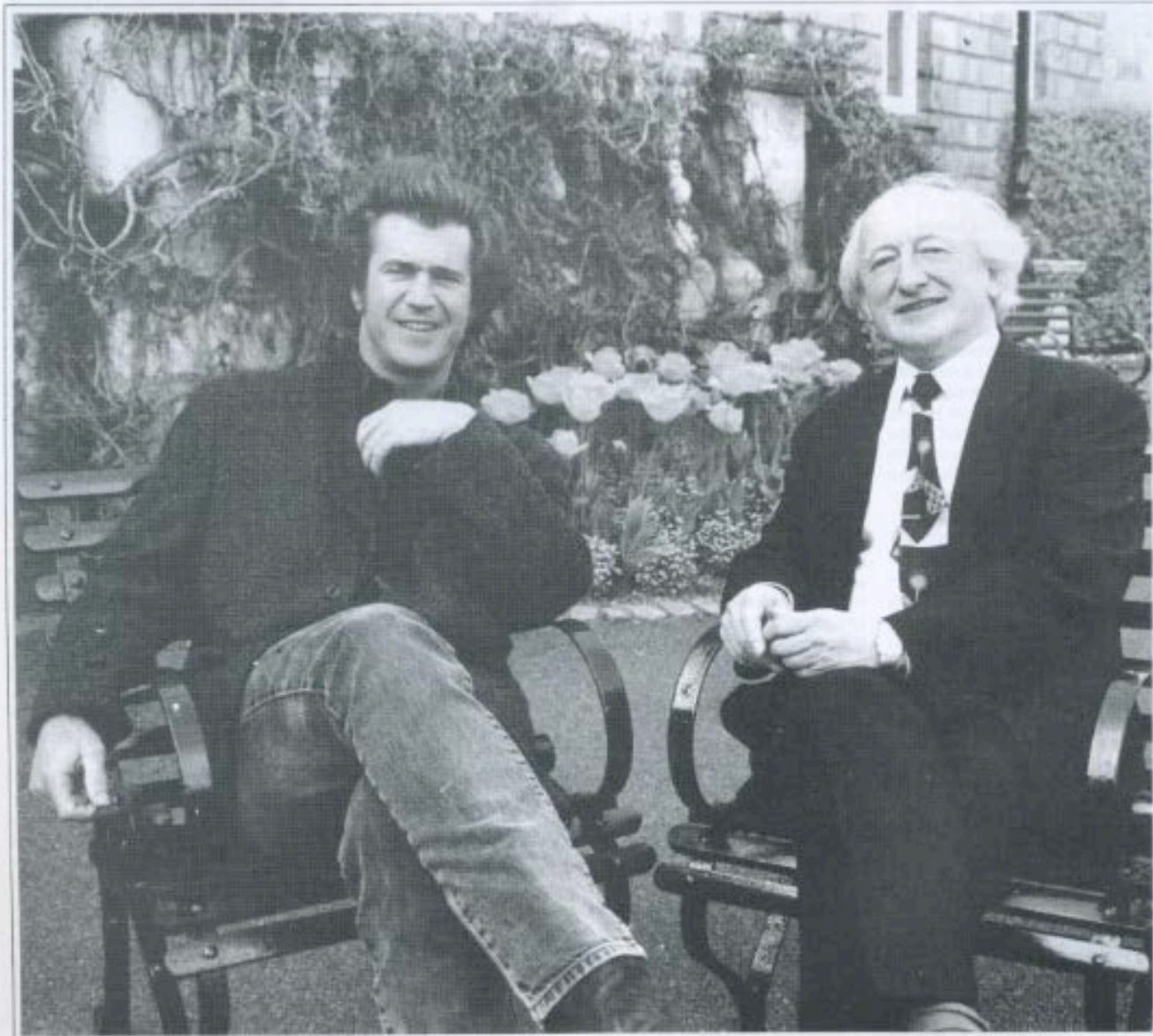
I assume if it proceeded with

the IDA it would be an arm of the IDA of some sort, but it would be very small. A commission function would essentially be: to set up a database of locations in the state, a proper marketing of the state as a location for film and a means by which the administrative encumbrances can be cleared at short notice-like access to closing roads, to police escorts, use of the army and so on. The intention would be to have a very good information pack, we'd have a video and written material in all our embassies, in all of the IDA, Bord Fáilte and Bord Tráchtála offices. The Minister hopes very much that it can be done. There is no decision yet as to whether there will be a film commission.

So has it been an exciting time?

Enormously exciting, it really

has, I have to say. We're kind of gob smacked quite frankly with the pace of advance and we're going to move on to music next which is going to be very interesting, but it's enormously exciting, yeah. You have to take risks and you have to look at more than the profit and loss account and the balance sheet because you have to look at how you can energise local communities in this country that are being depopulated and give people hope back into their communities and let them see that their children have opportunities to express their creativity. We're slowly getting a means by which we can, if you like, energise people-give them jobs.




Michael D. Higgins and Mel Gibson at Leinster House

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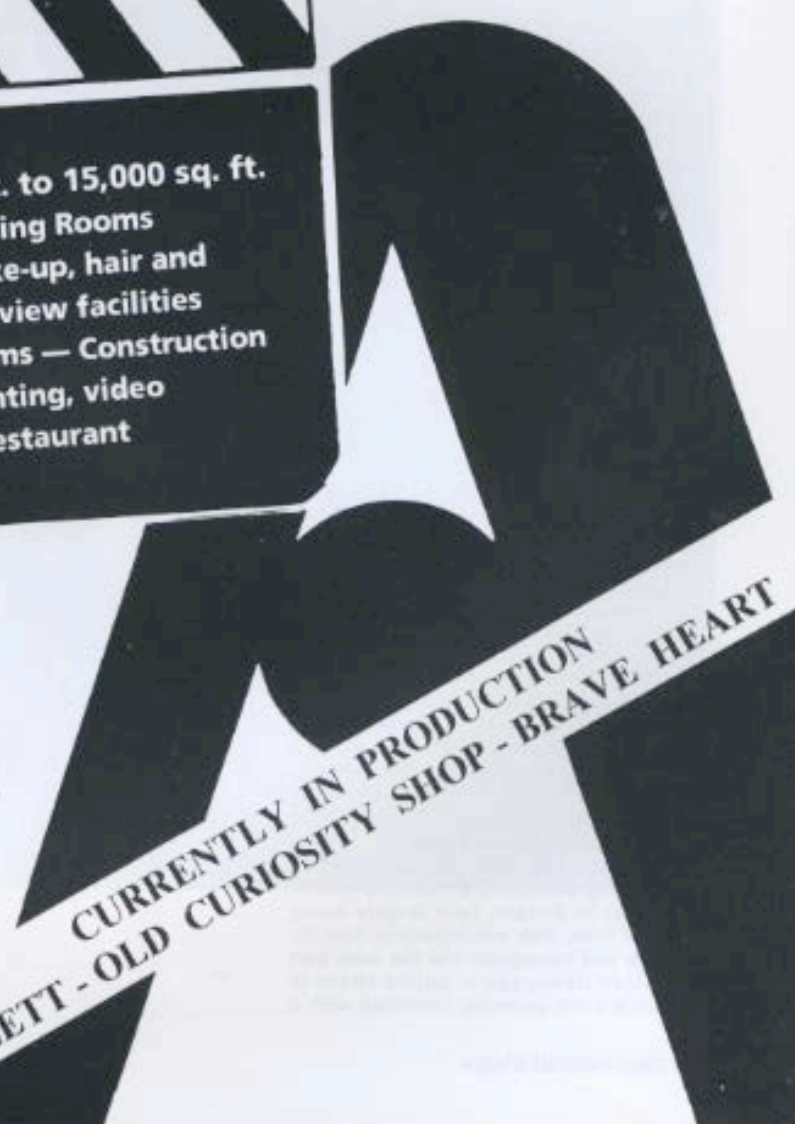


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CURRENTLY IN PRODUCTION
SCARLETT - OLD CURIOSITY SHOP - BRAVE HEART

THE FAR SIDE - AMERICAN LETTER

'In the Name of the Father' was probably the Irish film of the past decade that looked most certain to succeed at the American box-office. Jim Sheridan was identifiable as the director of 'The Field' and 'My Left Foot' and had won an Oscar. With the 'Last of The Mohicans' and 'The Age of Innocence', Daniel Day-Lewis achieved the status of a bankable matinee idol. Distribution was no worry: Universal had, after all, broken all the records with 'Jurassic Park'. 'In the Name of the Father' opened on only very limited release in December 1993 in order to be eligible for the 1994 Oscars, but went into national distribution in late February with its seven Academy Award nominations. The film opened in England on February 11 to predictable furore.

By the end of its theatrical run in May of this year, despite everything in its favour, 'In the Name of the Father' had not been widely seen by American audiences. In four months of theatrical release, it earned 24 million dollars or less than half of what 'Naked Gun 33 1/3' grossed in America in its first eight weeks. By comparison, 'The Crying Game' took in nearly 60 million in its 1993 American theatrical release alone.

Standing against the success of the film in America were a handful of negative reviews and the single largest barrier to reaching an American audience: its subject matter. History is almost always the kiss of death for commercial success in America and history here refers to everything before the inauguration of the sitting American President. For the average 26 year-old American movie-goer, ancient history is everything before his birth. Of the 44 million Americans who claim Irish ancestry, most are very comfortable with the version of Ireland's history and politics seen in 'Ryan's Daughter' or 'Far and Away'. Many, with no better sense of geography than of history, also have trouble finding the state of Florida on a map of the US. Oliver Stone's historically ludicrous film 'JFK' could succeed only because it catered to the lack of historical sense and fed the insatiable American appetite for conspiracies. The conspiracies depicted by 'In the Name of the Father' may have been, however, at once too real and too prosaic for folks who relished the paranoia of 'JFK'.

Worse, there was, after all, a problem with distribution of the film. Universal took the film to suburban 'multiplexes', as opposed to city centre theatres and art houses, so the film was often in competition with schlock comedies and thrillers. Worse, Universal's other huge film 'Schindler's List' was seriously overloading the historical circuitry of the American psyche.

Then came news of the controversy surrounding the film in Britain and reviews which, as in Britain, split largely along political lines. This was especially true for journals and periodicals. For the most part American newspapers, unlike those in Britain are not generally identified with a

political persuasion; most aspire to objectivity. So whereas the responses in newspapers were almost unanimously positive, most of them outright raves, reviews in periodicals were less consensual.

Several periodicals, including 'Vanity Fair', 'Commonweal', and 'New York

Magazine', published lengthy articles that chronicled the story of the Guildford Four in much needed detail. One of the most extensive and positive reviews of 'In the Name of the Father' came from a conservative monthly, 'The National Review', and was written by John Simon, the man fired from his tenure as the theatre critic of 'The New York Times' for the severity and occasional cruelty of his reviews. Beginning by calling it "a great movie", Simon went on for 46 column inches about the merits of the film: its structure, acting, cinematography, editing and direction.

But two other conservative magazines, 'The American Spectator' and 'Commentary', took issue with the historical and political content of 'In the Name of the Father' and hardly troubled with its merits as a film. Both insinuated that the innocence of the Guildford Four was uncertain.

In 'The American Spectator', James Bowman's review appeared in the March

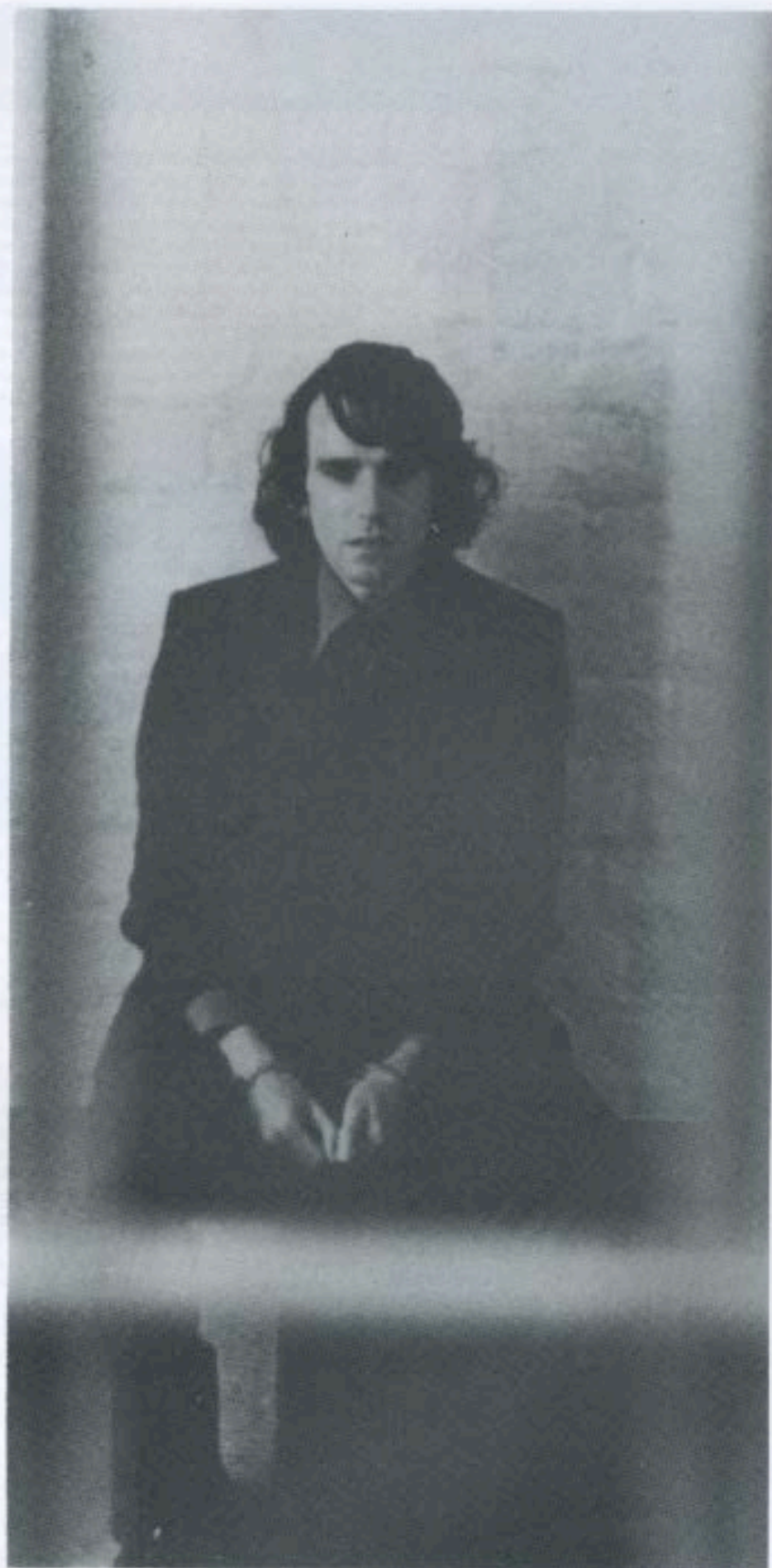


issue along with a piece entitled 'Gerryiatrics' which lamented Gerry Adams' success with the American media and condemned President Clinton for issuing Adams' 48-hour visa. Indeed, when Adams appeared on the popular 'Larry King Live' talk show, he seemed to endorse the film in hoping American audiences would see it. But that alone may have been enough to persuade some that the film itself was an endorsement of the IRA, a wholly erroneous proposition. Bowman's review, in turn, condemned Jim Sheridan making himself useful to the IRA. Bowman began by stipulating that the convictions of the Guildford Four and the Maguire Seven "were wrongful, though there are still those who say they did it." The rest of Bowman's review had precious little to do with the film but everything to do with his misreading of Sheridan's movie as pro-IRA propaganda.

Even more partisan, Richard Grenier's review in 'Commentary' was aptly summarised by its headline, 'In the Name of the IRA'. Grenier, like Bowman, is willing to concede that the convictions had been found "unsafe", but, he added, "the Guildford Four might not have been victims of an injustice at all." Having compared Sheridan to a documentarist who "falsifies every single known fact of the case", Grenier found the film "sanctimonious", "polemical", "heavily melodramatic," plagued by fictionalization. And not surprisingly Grenier virtually ignored the cinematic qualities of the film.

There is, of course, a familiar pattern at work here. The initial reception of Neil Jordan's 'The Crying Game' in Britain in late October and early November of 1992 was far less enthusiastic than in America. Typical was the coverage in 'The London Times' which bestowed a total of nine column inches on the film. Not until after the American reviews and the six Academy Award nominations in 1993 was it re-released in Britain. And by the time it appeared on video 'The Crying Game' had become a 'Classic British Thriller.' 'In the Name of the Father' will no doubt earn millions more in video release, but clearly not as a classic British thriller.

Americans have long accepted films portraying highly romantic images of the IRA hard man. The character played by Richard Harris in 'Patriot Games' provides a recent as well as egregious example. That the character of Gerry Conlon realises he can, even in prison, reject the violence and malevolence associated with the IRA is essential to his development and the film's structure. Ironically, the American combination of little historical sense and a favourable disposition toward even grotesque portrayals of the IRA hard man have worked against 'In the Name of the Father' here.



Joan Dean teaches at the University of Missouri, Kansas City.

On the Edge of Reason

"True, I was rather alone, but loneliness is not proof of not being right"

— Miroslav Krleža

Cinema in Russia finds itself revised by a secondary revolution. Of course Russian cinema has never existed. Too much history and not enough time conspire to rephrase the content and the context. Image is the all. The nature and necessity of propaganda to Lenin's newly established Soviet Union was nowhere more effectively versed than in the cinematic output of the initial years. This socialist realism was created and intended to be inspirational as the nation attempted to revise itself with progressive determination. Propaganda rarely distinguishes between fictions and truths. When fact and fiction combine to tell the truth, it could only possibly be a truth and one that is very difficult to cut away from the reality. In any case, truth is relative. Everything is true when perceived in mid-shot. The close-up will either confirm this or question it but the close-up itself becomes another truth that a wide shot may not necessarily reveal. Thus began the great experiment in montage. The image or the plan can be made to say anything when combined in an attractive way. The importance of this was well understood by both the artist and the State.

Those pioneers who were prepared to burn remnants of bourgeois furniture for a few shaky images, provided an inspirational basis for what was to be a revolutionary cinema. Inspired by the infamous autumnal rising, swept along by an ideology that

proclaimed them to be the most important instruments in the most important of arts, they pursued their vision in full commitment with the rising Socialist state. Hand in hand, on that long road to Utopia, at least until the state began to twist the arm of creation and bring it to its knees. So, Socialist realism became nothing of the sort, the all-encompassing state providing the means and forever dictating the ends to their required vision. Those daring to bite the hand found it gripped around their necks, asphyxiated by the mass conspiracy of Communism. So, Kuleshov could have an effect but not the way he might have wished; Pudovkin could rage against the machine but from Asian exile; Trauberg could invent but only for himself; Eisenstein could create masterpieces in his mind which Stalin would never allow to see the light of day; Vertov, forever in search of pure cinema, never did step over the line whereas Medvedkin did, in true happiness, except that nobody seemed to notice. Their contemporaries survived only because they played the rules of the game, sacrificing themselves for their art in complete reverse. In the thaw that followed Stalin's demise, nothing really changed. The cult of Stalin was demystified, but the cult of cinema remained being forever dogged by necessity. Sheptiko, after her ascent, crashed into oblivion; Paradjanov; who, after discovering forgotten ancestors, found himself shadowed and imprisoned; and Tarkovsky, the only true successor to Eisenstein, fell foul of jealousy and ignorance. Once despised in his homeland, now he is praised beyond belief, suggesting perhaps that the only good Russian artists are dead ones.

This state of revisionism finds itself in necessity because of a breach in the wall of the outer sphere which brought not only visions of life from beyond but a massive destabilisation that threatens to destroy any sense of what was, or of what may have been. Over the wall comes the incessant flood of image making signed, sealed and delivered from Americana. What in Europe and further west took many years to develop, is now being force fed on an unsuspecting nation as the ultimate freedom of expression; with this illusion of

freedom, comes other less desirable ones; where once the state financed every idea set to celluloid, it no longer deems it viable. Art, it seems, will always be sacrificed in the face of a capital-ism. So, contemporary film-makers, while finding it no longer necessary to revise an idea, now find it impossible to present one. In the rush to rise, the most important of arts is being neglected. It is now the image and the money, bonded hand in hand and beamed through the kosmos to the last great frontier left to television. The state and the artist have been deposed, each to their own, blinded by the light of new technology.

Many film-makers have defected to the newly-discovered medium, believing they are creating something that is new but really only achieving imitation and repetition. Some manage to escape the fatal glare by finding solace abroad or in the heart of the republics. Isoleani rediscovers himself in the city of light. Mikailikov too, goes away to come back but found his Eden in a forgotten part of the Union and Moratova implodes characters with colours outside of what was within. Those who remain are struggling to define themselves in a world that is not of their own making. They meet constantly to discuss and lament the decline of their once powerful deity and ponder with confusion about the present state of things and fear greatly for the future. "We may be sick but are not dead", goes the proclamation from Sava Kulish, the head of the directors guild. Their malaise, however, is terminal as their films elegise a chronic romanticism and a fatal re-reading of an imagined past. They belong to an era that struggles to try and forget that there is something to be forgotten. The present climate in Russia, sadly reflecting the state of its cinema, requires that the past be rejected en masse, buried in an archive and revised when necessary thus becoming progressively unknowable. At the State Institute of Cinematography, once the apple of Lenin's eye, film discussion involves a thorough investigation of aesthetics and a political denial of staggering proportions. Teachers content themselves with lecturing cinema as an art and the art of cinema without ever including cinema as an act or teaching the act of cinema. Every country, it seems, will always deny its own past in themselves. The new generation of film-makers have inherited the most difficult heritage of all. Trying to distinguish Soviet from Russian cinema, the past from the real past, the present from the imaginary present, the future from itself. Populism has become very adept at blurring the distinctions between history and myth. Russian cinema has never existed. It has only really existed in the minds of those persecuted for imagining it in that way. The gap between is the myth of total cinema. Ah! Revolution is so bitter sweet.

Peter Meagher studied at the State Institute of Cinematography, Moscow.



GALWAY FILM FLEADH 1994



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In June, Pat Collins spoke to **LOUIS MARCUS**, one of Ireland's most respected documentary makers. This year his 6 part series 'The Irish Condition' was broadcast on RTE and received widespread critical acclaim.

film west interview

In 1959 you described 'Mise Éire' as "truly an event of the most shattering consequence, not only for Irish cinema but in the general life of the country" I did?

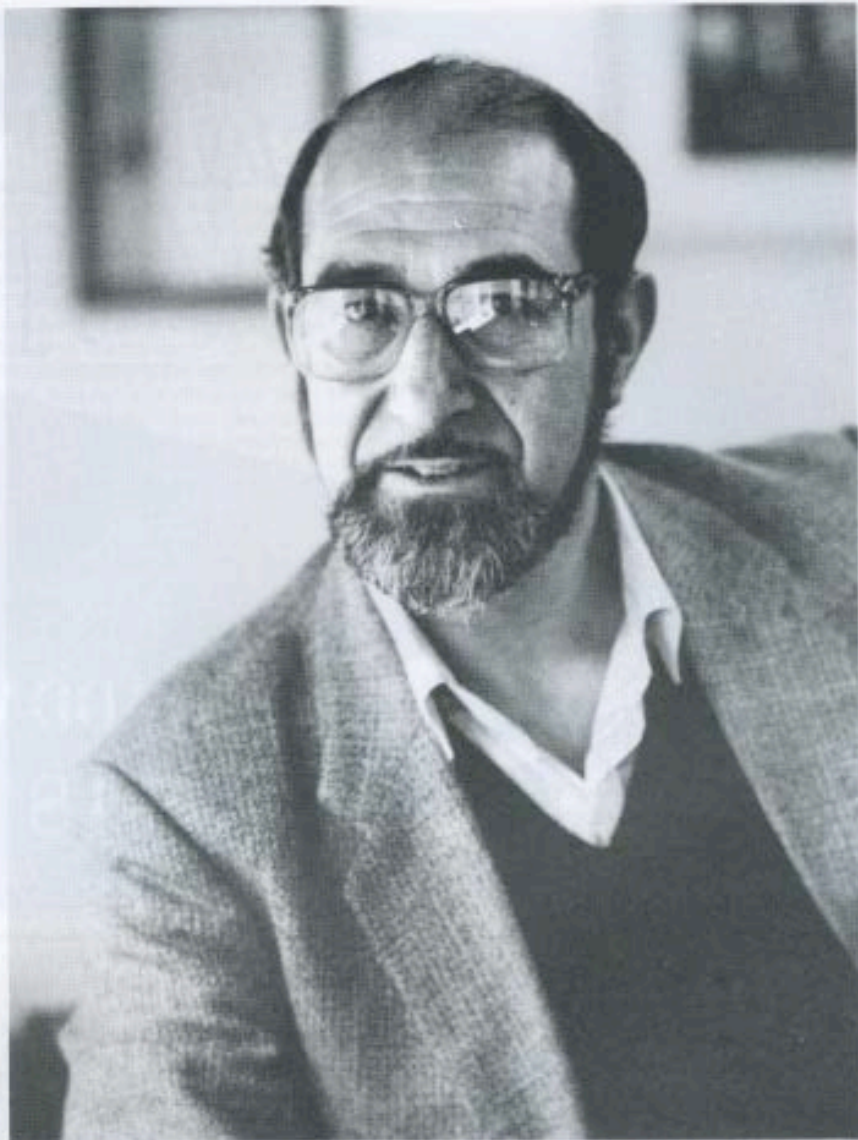
Do you still think that today?
I think it's a prediction that hasn't been fulfilled by events. I think I was young, enthusiastic and over optimistic.

Was that your first work in film?
Though I was only an assistant, it was the first professional job I had. I had made amateur films in the Cork film society where I first developed my interest and it was a miracle to get such a thing as a job in film making, there was only 4 or 5 people in the industry at that stage (laughs).

Did you go straight from that to making your own films for Gael Linn?

Well I realised that I would never be commissioned to make a film until I proved I could. So I went back to Cork and made a film about my friend Seamus Murphy, the sculptor called 'The Silent Art'. I got a few quid from my mother and everybody gave me the equipment and services free. I entered it in the 'Cork Film Festival' and I got cinema distribution all over Ireland. Well that meant that Gael Linn were prepared to commission me as a director. From the beginning of 1960 I started to make films for them. One on Gaelic football called 'Peil' and one on hurling called 'Christy Ring', and it went on from there.

Was that full-time employment?
I was technically freelance and could have been fired at the end of any production but we had continuity up to the end of the sixties, so I ended up being employed all the time. Since then it's always been sporadic, you could have a period of unemployment for up to a year at a time, but I've survived and certainly in the greatly changed climate of the last year or so, prospects are better now than they've ever been.



Is there a continuity of theme in your work through the years?

Well I'm not conscious of one. I don't have a manifesto to which I operate. I certainly have had a continuing interest in Irish traditional themes, Irish history, Fleadh ceoil, GAA, 'The Heritage of Ireland' for example. But then some of what I have done has gone all around the world and seems to be of universal interest so it's hard to know really.

How important is the language to you?

I think I would sum up my feeling about the Irish language as one of sadness and I don't mean that in a sense of lamenting the loss of a great and rich tradition which is true but for me it's not the crucial thing. I think there has been, in Irish language revival circles, far too much emphasis on the literary richness of Irish. A language in a normal society is not composed purely of literary richness, it is spoken at all levels of life and most of what is produced in it inevitably is rubbish - for me the Irish language will have been revived at a stage when you get the equivalent of the 'Sunday World' in Irish and when you'll get

pornography in Irish. The ultimate proof that neither the state or the voluntary language revival is truly interested in achieving the aim lies in the fact that they have never made an attempt to systematically study how Hebrew was revived in Israel and how Afrikaans was made the dominant language in South Africa. These are examples that have happened so recently that they can be studied. I know for example that all the techniques exist for the teaching of language in a mass way. If Ireland decided tomorrow that it genuinely wanted to speak Irish fluently as well as English, I would give it ten years and we would have a society in which almost everybody was able to conduct their affairs in Irish. At the moment the idea of the state trying to revive or even preserve the language is farcical. The whole effort of the state, for example the school curriculum, is to make sure that the language won't be spoken. And one can understand why, because a shift of language or a strengthening of a second language represents a revolution, and no establishment in its right mind will subsidise a revolution. They won't do it, the state, the

political parties, the church and the commercial establishment. No one wants Irish to become a living language in this society and from their point of view they're absolutely right.

Language is power?

Language is power, language is change, it's new insights, new aspirations, new feelings about things and no establishment would want to promote that, so the impetus has to come from somewhere else. If it ever became a bandwagon then the establishment would pragmatically face reality and leap on to it, but certainly not now.

Do you think that the loss of the language has anything to do with the reluctance of film-makers to tackle middle class contemporary Ireland?

Because of the language shift, we took on mental and social attitudes that created a problem with portraying contemporary Ireland on the screen. There would seem to be such a problem in the reluctance of writers to tackle subjects of that kind, as opposed to the nostalgia of the '50's and the growing up theme which seem to be the predominant flavours of the moment. It's a very complex question. We are so much under the influence of the Anglo-American media, which in film now means almost entirely the American industry and their emphasis is so much on the urban that I think we are inclined to assume that modern urban life is only real in the USA. What I'd like to see really is people setting films in contemporary urban Ireland not in a self-conscious way but because the story happens to be a good one and the characters are interesting.

To bring it up to date, what were your objectives when you set out to make 'The Irish condition'?

It grew out of a different idea. I submitted the usual half a dozen ideas to RTE in the hope of commission and I also included one about the Gaelic League, because it was their centenary in 1993 and I reckoned RTE would have to do something. So, I threw in an outline. I just sat down at the desk and from what I knew of the subject I sketched out six half-hours on the language revival and to my surprise this was the one they opted for and they commissioned it. Once I got the commission and could begin to work full-time on it I began to realise that you could not discuss the language in isolation from the politics, economics, social life and culture in the broadest sense and so the series developed from something about the revival as a self-contained subject into a survey of the Irish mind really since the Elizabethan conquest and the language shift.

You also concentrated on the period before independence?

Well, I was also very concerned to get across what I had discovered when I made a centenary film about Pearse in the late '70's. The pre-independence period was one of tremendous intellectual vitality and there were countless journals and magazines in which the issues of the day were debated passionately. There seems to be a vacuum in

such public debate in Ireland now. And yet wonderful work has been done over the last 15 to 20 years by people like Joseph Lee and Gearoid O Tuathaigh, Terence Brown and others which hasn't been reaching a wide audience. I felt that from the viewing figures of news and current affairs and documentary in RTE, that the Irish TV audience is probably the most sophisticated in the world in terms of its intellectual curiosity. There is a hunger for this kind of material, and I wanted to try and bring a quality of ideas to a wider audience. As well as that, since the war in the North began, a sophisticated cultural Nationalist view has not really had an airing and I felt that the time had come for that to be done. So they were among the aims of the series.

So your initial plan broadened out even to the extent of lengthening the programmes? Language is central to people's attitudes about everything, so that's why it grew into this broader idea of exploring the Irish condition. It wasn't until the early stages of editing we realised that six half-hours would be inadequate. It grew to six hours.

The politicians come across as very duplicitous in your series. Was this a conscious decision or just unavoidable?

Well it was certainly unavoidable if you want to give a truthful account of what happened, not only to the language revival but to the whole idea of independence. You see independence to Pearse and Connolly and the others meant intellectual independence from the Anglicisation which had weighed heavily on the country since the language shift, but it was not xenophobic or inward looking; it was in fact more conscious of Europe and the outer world than I think we truly are today, apart from the handouts from the EU and it wasn't Anglo phobic except for a certain wing. The Gaelic League under Pearse's editorship of 'An Claidheamh Soluis' regarded English and the culture of England as a boom that the country had received. The problem was not English culture but the slavish imitation of it in ways that were not appropriate to Irish circumstances. Looking at independence 70 years later one wonders what happened to all of that. You don't expect it to be all achieved of course but the failure rate seemed to be rather dramatic especially in terms of 300,000 unemployed and perhaps a 1/3 of the population living in what we politely call the deprived areas.

Would you agree that there was complete agreement between the academics?

I don't agree that there was complete agreement, there were certainly differences of opinion. I thought Terence Brown was very valuable to the series for, while he appreciates the importance of the language revival idea in the independence movement, he is not himself a believer in it. I didn't want to make a propaganda video about the revival of Irish. I wanted that kind of scepticism to be heard along with the benefits of the language, so there is certainly disagreement. But it is within the overall thrust of the series. This is always a question, to what extent you should have a balance when it comes to documentary.

Sometimes you just end up with a row, which of course some people prefer, they think it's more interesting, more lively, but I find it creates more heat than light. Only one reviewer complained that certain views should have been challenged. But the point is that this whole series was the first challenge to the prevailing consensus for a very long time, so I didn't have any qualms about that.

During the series, several of the interviewees said they were worried about homogenisation through the mass media. Does that concern you?

I think that very strongly. I think a lot of the thrust of this series was summed up by the interview clip with a man in the Ballymun flats when they were trying to set up the first Gaelscoil and he talked about the people all around him watching foreign TV all the time and taking all their views and attitudes from it. He said that bodily they were living in Ireland but spiritually they were living thousands of miles away and I think that's a very unhealthy situation for any country. Then if you say that, you are then accused of wanting to create a wall against outside influence, certainly not so. There is nothing wrong with having all kinds of outside culture sweeping into the country through the mass media provided people here were educated to some confident sense of their own identity.

Why was there only one female interviewee?

It was my intention to have several women and for different reasons, in each individual case, we ended up with only one. It's partly as a result of the fact women have not yet conquered the academic heights that men have held for so long. If this series were made in another 10 years there would have been a 50/50 split without even trying.

How much new footage did you shoot?

We didn't shoot any new footage. It would have taken a couple of months to shoot the standard documentary material and you had to go to the archives anyway for news and current affairs. One of the sub aims of the series was to show that academic ideas about Irish history or Irish attitudes are not something that exist in an abstract vacuum they are active and operative in the world around us. That is why I looked very much for news and contemporary material to illustrate what the academics were saying about the changes of attitude in the 18th century or the 19th century or whatever.

Was the use of archives expensive?

I can't go into details but I expect that the six hours will cost only a little more than the six half-hour programmes we had budgeted for.

Did you use a lot of your own footage?

Yes, I did. I used my series 'The Heritage of Ireland'. That was a six part series I did in the late '70's written and presented by Douglas Gageby. It was a celebration of all the invaders of Ireland from the Stone age people on, through the Celts, Vikings and the Normans and the English and the Scots.



How was that received at the time?

Very well as far as I remember. While it did not ignore questions like conquest and the suffering that resulted from it and the loss of the language and so forth, it nevertheless looked at the riches that have been accumulated from all of these sources.

You used very little voice over, was it an after thought?

No, it was my intention from the very beginning to keep voice over to an absolute minimum and to make it purely factual, that the voice over would not carry any viewpoint. I like very much the device whereby it is the interviewees who express all the ideas and views rather than the maker of the series.

Who do you think watched this series?

All I can tell you is that the series, in spite of the very late hour it was shown, collected and held a constant audience of just under two hundred thousand people which is one fifth of the peak RTE audience for Glenroe. If you look at the viewing figures for adults the ratings were about a third of the peak audience and that to my mind indicated that the Irish TV audience has got the kind of intellectual curiosity I felt it had, and that there is a hunger for the discussion of these

issues out there which is not being supplied by any of the mass media. There was a lot of phone calls to RTE asking for repeats.

As you were on both Film Boards, what are the differences between this board and the original one?

The previous Film Board operated in an atmosphere of high scepticism on the part of the state. There was one period when there was only three of us on the Board because they hadn't replaced members who had departed and we worked almost in an executive capacity, it was ludicrous. The new atmosphere under Michael D. and the present government is hugely supportive, we now have civil service support that is highly informed about the industry world wide. The atmosphere has changed utterly. The last board was fighting up hill against the state until it was finally axed.

What are your functions as a Board member?

You read an awful lot of scripts, you read an awful lot of documentation to do with policy matters, financial matters, attend all of the meetings and argue with the other members of the Board. It's very time consuming but very exciting and rewarding.

As a documentary maker would you like to see more documentaries getting funded?

Personally, because I've been in documentary all my life, I obviously would like to see more emphasis on it. However, in terms of employment the big gap in Irish film development is in the drama area, RTE's increasing commissioning of independently made programmes will hopefully do a lot to keep the non-drama part of the industry healthy. So I have to accept that the board's primary responsibility at this stage would have to be drama. But I would continue to argue for a continuation in documentary and continue to argue the details of how that should be done.

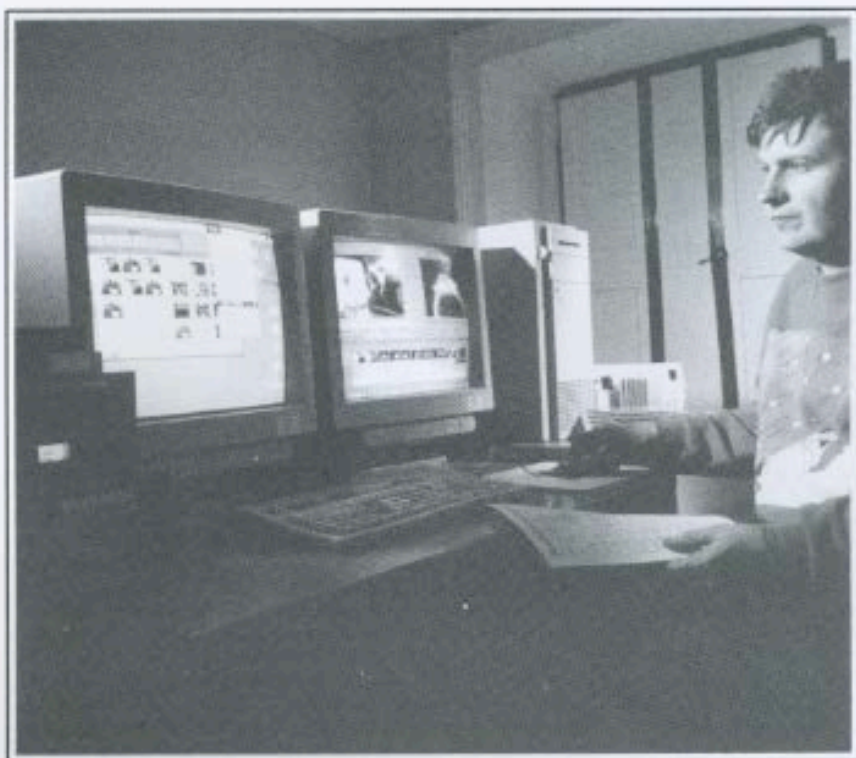
Is it difficult to make money out of documentaries?

I don't think you could ever make money out of documentaries. The object of the exercise is to keep sufficiently employed to make a living but the killing is really not made on documentary and I don't know that people realise how unlikely it is that you would ever make a killing out of a feature film either.

But is it possible to make a good living?

All I can say is that I have survived now since 1958, and would hope to continue to do so.

The addition of an Avid in Telegael represents a move into the next generation of post-production technology. The Avid is what is referred to in the trade as a 'non linear editing system'—Justin McCarthy explains—



AN AVID FAN

The first non-linear editing system was actually a Steinbeck! Linearity was (to some old fashioned purists), something that was created by the limitations of video technology and, the argument goes, it has taken until the 1990's for the technology to catch up with the traditional and highly effective work practices in film.

In the earlier days of video post-production there were two problems. The first was that time in an on-line suite was about as expensive per hour as a taxi ride around Manhattan. The second problem was that changing anything, particularly the running order of your programme, involved either a complete re-edit from scratch, or editing a copy of your edited programme—the first being expensive and the second resulting in serious quality loss.

In order to solve these problems, off-line systems were designed. An off-line system is any editing system that works on copies of the original footage not on the footage itself. This means that most of the creative work can be done without the need for a large editing suite and the resulting costs. There is of course nothing new about the concept. Charles Chaplin had insisted on editing positive prints of his negatives in the 1920's rather than editing the negative itself, which was the conventional wisdom of the time!

But film never had the problem of linearity, you could pick a shot from anywhere and dump it anywhere else. Unfortunately the first generation of videotape based on off-line systems were not so simple.

A first generation off line system usually contained a minimum of
2 Vtrs,
1 edit controller, (usually a customised pc with min 1 megabyte ram.),
Audio and video monitors.

All videotape off line systems use time codes, this means each frame of each tape has a particular and distinct number, but the original and the copy have the same number. All the off-line system has to do is remember what you did to the time code, and tell another computer (the on-line) to automatically do the same to the original pictures which have the same time code. Simple? Well, not really.

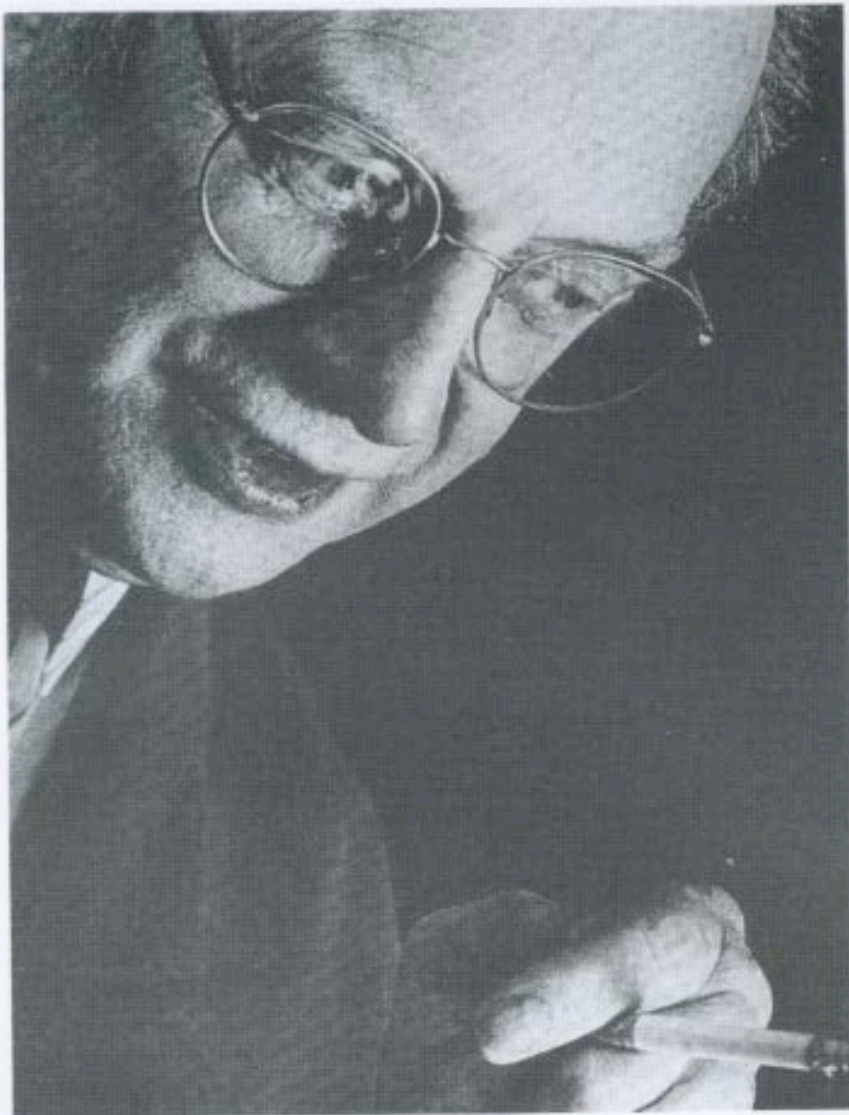
Most off-line edit controllers were clever until you wanted to change something, it was always possible, but never simple. You usually needed the patience of Job and a very wealthy saint of a client! Secondly, the work practice tended to mimic an on-line edit, so you tended to think like an on-line editor with a safety net. Thirdly, dissolves, wipes and slow motion were all impossible to see at the off-line stage.

The Avid managed to solve all these problems in one go. Firstly, the Avid has no transports so one starts a session by 'digitising' all the necessary footage. What this actually means is that the footage is copied straight to hard disk. This means that as far as the computer is concerned, the time code information and the footage are actually the same thing, consequently when you are finished a session the time code lists are precisely what you have edited. In other words, you see what you get.

This means that you don't need a degree in computer programming to create a 100% accurate edit list—you ask the Avid and it simply gives it to you. Not just that but the Avid is designed to be compatible with everything, so you ask it to give a specific list for a specific edit controller and it does so.

Secondly, you can continually change your mind, add in or take out bits of scenes or pictures anywhere in the programme by picking them up with a mouse and moving them. Film editors have found the Avid astonishing simply because its software was written to complement their work practices. It's really a Macintosh married to a Steinbeck with 100% tape compatibility. Avid can edit from film as easily as from tape and give a precise neg cutting list for 16mm or 35mm (despite the 24 frames a second).

My favourite single thing about the Avid, however, is that it is really just another very clever, very user-friendly Macintosh. This is not to underestimate it, however—Macintosh have done to film and TV in the '90's what they have already done to print and design in the '80's.



their conversation it was clear that this was something special, a final farewell from a man who had dedicated his life's work to a medium unworthy of his talents; a medium which he demonstrated again, as he had done so often with his plays, through his passion and intelligence, is as capable as any other medium of producing excellence.

I was exactly one year old when Potter's first play, *The Confidence Course* was broadcast on BBC 1 on February 24th 1965. It concerned a gang of con-men running a motivation conference to raise the self-esteem of a group of dull losers. I've never seen it, but God, what a lovely idea. Television was a disposable medium in those days. Four of Potter's first nine plays now exist only in script form; the others were wiped after one screening.

In all, he produced 29 single plays, 5 original series, 5 serialized adaptations, 5 motion pictures and 5 novels. When one considers that since 1961 he suffered from psoriatic arthropathy, a particularly malicious form of psoriasis, which left him, as he described in *The Singing Detective*, "cracked, scabbed, scaled, swollen, scarlet and snowy white and boiling with pain" this was a phenomenal output.

In a fascinating introduction to his book on television, *Waiting for the Boat*, Potter described how his condition was directly responsible for his emergence as a television playwright. ("To trundle the adjectival noun 'Television' in front of the noble old word 'Playwright' is not entirely dissimilar to placing 'processed' right next to 'cheese'.") Bedridden, with a wife and young children to support, he submitted *The Confidence Course* to the BBC where it was immediately accepted, and he was commissioned to write another play for them.

His early works concentrated on his experiences at the hands of the English class system. Having been born to working class stock in Berry Hill in the Forest of Dean, (his father was a coal-miner) he won a scholarship to Oxford in the 1950's and

'WAITING FOR THE BOAT'

Dennis Potter and Television

by Nicky Fennell

"The very idea of participating in a judiciously edited programme called *The Psychiatrist's Chair* fills me with even more distaste than the degree of grossness such a series quite justifiably provokes. Perhaps incorrectly I imagined the soft lights, the comfortable chair, the reassuring voice, the absence of technical paraphernalia, the seduction drawn out of intellectual vanity and public attitudinizing."

Such was the response of Dennis Potter in 1983 after he had been asked to do a 40

minute interview with Dr. Anthony Clare for the BBC's famous radio programme.

Eleven years later, on April 5th, Potter gave what he knew was to be his final interview to Melvyn Bragg under conditions not 100% removed from the above description. Potter was dying of cancer and knew he had approximately 10 weeks to live. It was probably the most riveting piece of television that we are likely to see for some time.

Television is such a casual medium; it is rare indeed that a programme running for 100 minutes can hold a viewers attention. But from the moment the two men began

came straight up against the English caste system first hand. This experience was to become the subject matter for two of his most successful earlier plays, *Stand Up Nigel Barton* ('65) and *Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton* ('65). *Estranged*, and at times ashamed of his working class origins, yet continually on the fringes of the upper classes, Potter was stuck in a no-man's land. "I don't feel that I belong anywhere in particular. I travel between two utterly different worlds," complained Nigel Barton at the end of the second play.

Laid up for six or seven months every year, it is easy to see where the bile and

phlegm which Potter was capable of injecting into his work had its origin. **Brimstone & Treacle**, filmed in 1976 and banned for eleven years by the BBC is Potter at his most diabolical. In the play, he subverts the age old story of an angel arriving in the shape of a benevolent human and performing a miracle. The play concerns a physically and mentally handicapped young girl who is 'brought back to life' when she is raped by a handsome young visitor who moves in with her parents. It provoked uproar. In his final interview, Potter talked about the controversy and explained;

"It was diabolical; it was meant to be." (But it was) "meant to make you think about the way we manipulate the words good and bad. If people get so conditioned that they'll watch these endless pappy series, where there's violence every 20 seconds, there's sex used just like that, bang! There are constant sanctimonious references to God or the good. If you try and make people see the real use of these words, they get hopping mad. So be it, that's what television is for too."

In the mid 70's Potter began taking the anti-cancer drug Razoxane, which had a remarkable effect on his psoriasis. He was in less pain and able to work at a much faster rate. Over the next six years he produced his greatest works, the plays **Blue Remembered Hills** and **Cream in My Coffee**, the masterful film **Dreamchild**, which told the story of Lewis Carroll and Alice Liddell, the girl he wrote 'Alice in Wonderland' for, and the two series, **Pennies from Heaven** ('78) and **The Singing Detective** ('84). However, in a sickly twist worthy of one of his better plays, his release from pain proved to have devastating consequences. Razoxane was discovered to be carcinogenic.

Potter had first used the idea of the old songs as 'an agent of human aspiration' in his 1969 play **Moonlight on the Highway**. It was one of the many innovations which he continued to return to and improve as his work progressed. With **Pennies from Heaven**, **The Singing Detective** and the final part of the trilogy, **Lipstick on Your Collar**, Potter played the idea of the old songs beautifully. All Arthur Parker wants in **Pennies** is to live in a world where the songs come true. The blend of the songs and the drama achieved a form of magic realism never before seen on television. In his last interview, Potter suggested that the majority of human misery stems from our inability to communicate properly with our loved ones. Bob Hoskins' Arthur loves the songs because the songs can say it better than he can. Potter told Bragg: "I wanted to write about the way popular culture is an inheritor of something else. You know that cheap songs, so called, actually do have something of the Psalms of David about them. That's why people say 'Listen, they're playing our song!' It's not because that particular song actually expressed the depth of the feelings that they felt when they met each other and they heard it. It is that somehow it re-evokes it but with a different coating of irony and self-knowledge."

This 'coating' accounts for a large chunk of

the success which genre films have acquired in cinematic history; the tension created between the past and the present by subtle dollops of irony and self-knowledge. Where Bing, the Andrews Sisters, Ella Fitzgerald, etc., were used to coax us into a melancholic empathy with Arthur in 'Pennies', Potter took the device one step further in **The Singing Detective**. He took that classic genre flick, the hard-boiled private eye, and rooted it firmly in the real world by giving his main character the same condition he himself suffered from, psoriatic ankylositis. He then blended form and content by using many of the songs as 'hallucinations', which is a symptom of the disease, and stirred in his childhood memories of the Forest of Dean, a modern film noir subtext and a superbly malignant villain in the shape of Patrick Malahide's 'Mark Binney'. Furthermore, he played superbly with the conventions of television, blending one plot strand into another through space and time and introducing a wonderful pair of blundering detectives, hot in pursuit of Michael Gambon's psoriatic private eye, who realise midway through the series that they are merely a red herring, invented by the writer to spout clichés like 'Let's get the hell out of here!' and 'vow instead to kill the writer before he can write them out of the script!!'

Lipstick on Your Collar played the music of the 40's against the rock 'n' roll of the 50's as a metaphor for the changes British society encountered after WW II. "Somebody built it (society), but it doesn't feel as though it was us," muses the young hero. Though weaker than its two predecessors, 'Lipstick' still managed to squeeze new life out of old formats and was perhaps overall the most uplifting series of the trilogy.

"I have spent the greater part of my career trying to write and get on the screen the kind of work which assumes that viewers are not zombies" wrote Potter in 1983. Eleven years later he told Bragg; "I chose the medium (television) with the myopic precision of a watch-maker who was blissfully unaware that quartz crystals would soon be able to take over the job, and it is now too late for me to think otherwise."

Potter referred to working in television as toiling on the 'lower slopes' and 'neglected scree' of 'high-culture'. It was fitting that he should choose the medium to make his final statement, and to use the medium in such a way as to raise it to the highest pinnacles of the same metaphor. He told Bragg that his final two works in progress, **Karaoke** and **Cold Lazarus**, two interconnected series which the BBC and Channel 4 have agreed to work together in producing, would prove a fitting memorial to his life's work.

"If I can finish them, I'm quite happy to go."

Thankfully both series go into production in January 1995.

Stay by your screens.

From Potter's Last Interview with Melvyn Bragg.

5 April 1994

"We're the one animal that knows we're going to die, and yet we carry on, paying our mortgages, doing our jobs, behaving as though there's eternity and we forget or tend to forget that life can only be defined in the present tense, it is and it is now. Much as we would like to call back yesterday, and yearn to, we can't. However predictable tomorrow is....The only thing you know for sure is the present tense, and that oneness becomes so vivid to me that in a perverse sort of way, I'm almost serene, I can celebrate life."

"I mean the kind of Christianity - or indeed any other religion - that is a religion because of fear of death or hope that there is something beyond death does not interest me. What kind of cruel old bugger is God, if it's terror that is the structure of religion."

"I think we should always look back on our own past with a sort of tender contempt. As long as the tenderness is there, but also please let some of the contempt be there, because we know how we shove and push and sometimes use grand words to cloak it."

"Politics is still crucially important. Our choices are vital, and we've got to make them and not just say, oh, they're all the same."

"Everything's (been given) its price tag, and the price tag's become the only gospel. If you start measuring humankind in those terms everything else then becomes secondary. All the things that bind us as a community."

Int.

A large room with a party in progress. Black and white. Thumping dance music fills the sound track. Camera zooms in on a pale young man who stares intently at a young woman who enters the room with another man. We cut to a close shot on the table at which the young man sits. A large joint is being passed around the table. The young man takes a huge pull and looks back up at the girl at the far side of the room. The camera work becomes frenetic; lots of fast zoom shots, as the young man rises and makes his way towards her. We cut to a point-of-view shot as he weaves towards her. All the people in the room begin to turn towards him and close in. The camera tracks back from behind him as he backs away from them, through a set of French doors and then over the edge of a balcony from where he plummets, presumably to his death. A flash of German script, with the only familiar word being 'hashish' brings the piece to an end.

Cut to

A garish red room. A youth runs about in fast motion, dressed in Y-Fronts and Doc Martins. He runs close into the camera and pulls a variety of faces while discordant bass and drum sounds pound. He runs back into the room and leaps about foolishly. Again he approaches the camera and this time urges us to buy 'Tizer', a soft drink I'm unfamiliar with.

Cut to

A small frightened looking boy sitting on a cot. We pull out through a door to an over the shoulder shot of a prison guard closing an iron door and ramming home a number of bolts. We can still see the boy through a small portice, until the guard closes a latch over this also. Phil Collin's voice then comes on the soundtrack and tells us its criminal to lock up adults with children.

Cut to

A gormless looking creature in a badly cut frock with a sing-song voice swaying hyperactively as she introduces us, in pigeon English, to the new Roxette single, with a title a Eurovision winner would be proud of.

What the frock?

Yes, its MTV Europe. And here's the rub! The MTV Network is seen in 5 continents, 88 countries, one quarter of a billion households, has a turnover of \$677 million a year and is the biggest, ie. received in the most homes, television channel in the world. 60 million homes in Europe receive MTV!

Now the way I see it, rock music has always been equated with rebellion, from Little Richard, Alan Freed, Chuck Berry, up through Elvis, Jim Morrison, Lou Reed, The New York Dolls, Iggy Pop and on to the whole Punk



Slick and rapid, blatantly uncritical of any of the crap it offers, the channel wears its PC button on its forehead, reducing issues such as racism, AIDS and drugs to a level that makes them as meaningful as wearing Adidas shoes or drinking Coca Cola.

explosion. Music was a threat to the status quo, involving a whole mess of attitudes that bespoke people thinking outside of the societal standards that they were expected to conform to.

I remember seeing an interview with David Cronenberg some years ago, in which he compared the middle classes to a giant amoeba. Any time an amoeba is threatened, it doesn't fight back, it merely absorbs its foe as slowly and peacefully as it can, until the foe is part of the amoeba. And when the middle class thirty somethings reach power positions and get to control their own television channels?

I think what I find most disturbing about MTV is the way the pop promo's and the advertisements blend into one another. The constant fast cuts and swirling images, lacking all depth, all sense of inquiry, have the cumulative effect of blending into a vacuous blur, whose sole intent is to sell, sell, sell. Slick and vapid, blatantly uncritical of any of the crap it offers, the channel wears its PC button on its forehead, reducing issues such as racism, AIDS and drugs to a level that makes them as meaningful as wearing Adidas shoes

or drinking Coca Cola.

MTV Europe is run by chief executive Bill Roedy, a 45 year old American who used to oversee the supply of NATO missiles to the American Army. "Now I spread peace through music", says Roedy. Roedy plans a string of ancillary businesses over the coming year; magazines, interactive shopping, merchandizing of MTV muck, as well as a new music channel called VH-1 which will be launched later this year and aimed at the thirty-something audience. Roedy knows his business, and has a litany of statistics at his fingertips to demonstrate just how 'groovy' MTV really is. 30% non Anglo American music, 17% German on the playlist, 22% less American sourced programming than ITV or BBC. Yeah, And 100% shite.

Is there anything positive about MTV?

Yes. 'Whale's 'Hobo Humpin' Slob Babe' and Beavis and Butt Head heh heh hehing at a Judas Priest video and commenting, "Heh, this video makes me want to kill myself."

Bring back the salad days of Fab Vinny.

Following on from my piece on television censorship last issue, and acknowledging the fact that the majority of worthwhile TV viewing over the last month has been World Cup orientated, I thought it fitting to mention that Iranian television, showing the matches live for the first time since 1979, is replacing coverage of the crowd scenes with pre-recorded footage of sensibly garbed overcoat-clad spectators to remove the temptation of scantily-clad women frolicing about on Islamic screens. What a shame RTE don't do something similar whenever we go back to the panel.

An interesting piece in July's 'Sight and Sound'. The Bravo cable channel is to add an Independent Film Channel to its ranks from September 1st. It will run 24 hours a day, sans ads and will fund a limited number of student films. Its advisory board consists of Martin Scorsese, Spike Lee, Robert Altman, Joel and Ethan Coen, Martha Coolidge and Steven Soderbergh. Initially it will only be available in the States, but no doubt it will be picked up by some enterprising Murdoch type for European distribution. Start saving.

Finally, it would appear that the promise exacted from Michael Howard, the British Home Secretary, from David Alton on the introduction of tighter laws on video certs has some interesting victims. So far James Ferman's 'Unsuitable For Home Viewing' list includes 'Reservoir Dogs', 'Shopping', 'True Romance' and 'Birth of A Nation' for racism!! Methinks James may know exactly what he's doing. Let's hope some proper guidelines are laid down soon.

— Rat Boy

Born in 1944, Michael Reeves obtained his education at Radley school in England. Due to his intense passion for cinema, he became one of the leading figures in the industry during the 1960's. His unique style brought an original approach to the sagging British horror film of that time, which was becoming dominated by Hammer films.

Reeves first break came when he was living in the States and it was there he met his idol Don Siegel, who gave him the job of dialogue director on Elvis Presley's picture 'Fun in Acapulco' (1963). When Reeves returned to England, a long time friend Paul Maslansky (now producer of Police Academy pics) invited him to Italy to help with some scripts on a horror picture called 'Castle of the Living Dead'. Made in 1964 and set in Central Europe, it tells of a troupe of travelling players who are invited to give a performance at the castle of Count Drago, who has a passion for taxidermy. During the film, four of the six players are disposed of by Drago, who in turn is pierced by a scalpel that has been dipped in his own mummifying poison. A standard 'Gothic horror', although several ingredients make it a footnote in genre history: Christopher Lee giving a distinguished presence as Count Drago and a short appearance by Donald Sutherland in his film debut. Also, Aldo Tonti who had previously shot 'Nights of Cabiria' in 1956 for Fellini, shot this picture. Reeves' contribution was co-writer and second unit director.

Michael Reeves decided to stay in Italy. Maslansky, who was impressed with Reeves work on the previous film, offered him the chance to direct his own feature. 'Revenge of the Blood Beast', with a budget of £18,000, was filmed in 1965 at a break-neck speed of 19 days. It starred well known horror queen Barbara Steele as the witch Vardella, and Ian Ogilvy (who later went on to appear in Reeves' next two films), as her husband.

In 1966, he returned to England and after several attempts started production on his second film as director. 'The Sorcerers' concerns an old couple, Dr. Marcus Monserrat (Boris Karloff) and his wife Estelle (Catherine Lacey), who have long distance hypnotic powers over a teenager Mike (Ian Ogilvy). They become his controllers and he their puppet,

CULT CORNER



MICHAEL REEVES

forcing him to wreak havoc. The film ends with Mike's car crashing and bursting into flames. As a result his controllers burn to death in their flat. Reeves was at this time only twenty three and it was as a result of the film's success that he was given his largest budget to date from American International pictures, to direct and script his third and final picture.

1968 saw the release of 'Witchfinder General'. Based on the true-life activities of a lawyer from Ipswich, Matthew Hopkins (played by Vincent Price), introduces a new and bloody terror to England during the 17th century. His rampage is finally brought to a halt after a young soldier Richard (Ian Ogilvy) brings him down with several axe blows. Not for a long time had a film aroused such an

outray about gratuitous violence, which is surprising, since out of the films 87 minutes, only two scenes linger on violence, the opening and the end.

Apparently, Reeves had trouble in controlling Price's usual tongue-in-cheek manner, so much so that constant war between director and actor on set was an everyday occurrence. Price greatly resented this 24 year old telling him how to act properly. Reeves originally wanted Donald Pleasance as Hopkins but A.I.P. said that they would only give the young director the budget on condition that their actor-in-arms, Price, was in the lead. The carrot was dangled in front of Reeves' face and for the sake resented he had to comply. But Reeves' constant haggling resulted in Price giving one of his finest-ever performances. "I was surprised how terrifying Vincent was in that, I hadn't expected it" said Sam Arkoff of A.I.P.

Reeves' had planned a follow-up with a film called 'The Oblong Box' but by now he was under a doctor's care for treatment of anxiety and depression. He was under considerable pressure, having to defend 'Witchfinder General' from the censor (who hacked away 7 minutes from his cut) and the English press - Margaret Hinxman of 'The Sunday Telegraph' denounced the film "as a sadistic extravagance". Less than a year after the release of his finest work, Reeves was dead. On February 11, 1969 he perished as a result of an overdose of alcohol and sedatives. Don Siegel, a close friend of Reeves, was in Mexico shooting 'Two Mules for Sister Sara' when he learned of Reeves' death. "I think he committed suicide", Siegel contended, "I couldn't figure out why, for a man who had achieved very quick recognition. I guess in a fit of depression, he just made the choice."

Eighteen years after Reeves' death, the original British print of 'Witchfinder General' played in the Museum of Modern Art's New York retrospective of British films. The movie quickly became one of A.I.P.'s biggest hits, even out-grossing the Corman/Poe cycle.

Reeves' death marked the end of an era and the passing of an incredible talent.

- Michael Brennan

THE PIANO

(Dir. Jane Campion, with Holly Hunter, Sam Neill, Harvey Keitel and Anna Paquin).

As L.L. Levinson once said, a critic is "one who goes along for deride." This is hardly surprising given that most critics tend to be frustrated artists, bitterly trying to hack out a living by writing about crap film. (Anticipating the response of all armchair critics out there let me say that I do not consider myself an artist, merely frustrated, and while I certainly hack, it's hardly a living.) But the critic's energy is nonetheless a finite resource, which is relentlessly chipped away by an infinite mass of bland Hollywood junk - what we might call the 'naked-babe-and-car-chase' school of cinema. At the other end of the cinema spectrum is what's usually dubbed the 'art-house' flick, i.e. pretty much the same thing except the naked babes speak French and you're left waiting for a car chase that never happens (I believe it's called 'existentialism').

The people who watch these art-house flicks are usually disaffected civil servants or lonely arts' students, and tend to drink bottles of beer with limes stuck in their neck (only the neck of the bottle, alas). In reality though, these people couldn't tell a Bergman from a walkman, but they throw enough shapes to leave the plain old cinema buff feeling like a plain old buff.

Is it any wonder then that the critic tends to deride? Despite all the good reports I had heard from genuine film buffs I wasn't feeling all that enthusiastic about watching Jane Campion's *The Piano*. For starters it



reeked of the art-house tag: mute woman plays piano in colonial New Zealand and has an affair with renegade settler. Add to this Harvey Keitel with an Irish accent (and biro marks all over his face) and a precocious nine year old and you're definitely looking for trouble - Merchant Ivory art-house meets Kiwi out-house. As well as this it has become rather fashionable to applaud a film with a female director/writer. Politically correct protocol insists that the more oppressed and marginalized the artist, the nobler the work of art - by this criteria if only Campion could be a black lesbian catholic from West Belfast her genius would be assured amongst the chattering classes. On the evidence of Campion's *An Angel at my Table*, this certainly seemed to be the case; worthy though it was, it was also mind-numbingly dull. So it was with a sense of wary trepidation that this weary intrepid approached

The Piano. And what a surprise: this is one of those beautiful gems which leave you thinking about it weeks later.

Ada (Hunter) is a self-imposed mute - the reason for her silence is never explained - who arrives on a remote New Zealand beach to begin life with a new husband she's never met. All she has in the world is her intense, solemn dignity, her daughter and her beloved piano. The new hubby (Neill) blows it straight away by refusing to lug the piano up the mountain to his dreary rain-forest ranch, leaving it as so much flotsam for a rival landowner, Baines (Keitel), to recover. Bizarrely, Baines sets up a sordid deal with Ada - for sexual favours she can buy back her piano. Every day she trots grimly off to his ramshackle cabin, hammering out the most beautiful music while the half-tame Harvey leers voyeuristically from his bunk. The *Lady Chatterly*-like twist is that Ada, repelled by her impotent and repressed husband, turns to the sexually magnetic Baines and begins an erotic affair - a kind of *Last Tango in B-Minor*.

The metaphors of muteness and music animate this compelling narrative into a sublime and sensual drama. Dialogue is sparse but oddly this is appropriate; the texture is developed more by Michael Nyman's passionate score and Jane Campion's magical visual imagination. The overall effect is calmly magnificent and immensely spiritual, and it effortlessly blows away the cobweb clichés of a male-dominated cinema. This quietly powerful film will linger in the imagination - and not a bloody car chase in sight.

- Keith Hopper



DO I NOT LIKE THAT?

There will be a stage during this World Cup when the successes or failures of the Irish football team will be laid at the feet of Jack Charlton. From our 3-1 defeat by Spain last October, as mutinous murmuring filled the air, to the cries of jubilation on the 17th of November when we qualified for the US, no matter how a football team plays, it is the manager who shoulders the blame or praise.

On 17th November, England's team played its manager Graham Taylor out of a job - "an impossible job". 'Do I Not Like That' is one of the 'Cutting Edge' documentaries which chronicles the rise and fall and eventual plummeting of Taylor and the England team as they struggled to qualify for the 1994 World Cup. This best selling release is 25 minutes longer than its T.V. showing and for those of you who've seen it on T.V.,

includes extra coverage of Paul Gascoigne more than anything else.

As a fly-on-the-changing-room-wall documentary, Taylor allowed director/producer Ken McGill unprecedented access to a manager's private thoughts, words and actions as well as those of his team, coaching staff and the FA executive. This was meant to be a glorious record of England's triumphant march to the World Cup, and in fact they started off well, but draws against Holland and Poland started the rot. The tension on the bench during the game at Poznan is almost unbearable: Taylor's frustration and anguish is apparent both on and off pitch as he realises that his team is ignoring everything they practiced in training. As the campaign progresses, it becomes clear that the blame lies more with the players than with their manager for the poor results.

From here on, the manager starts to crumble; bad performances, poor (by his own admission) selections and a run of defeats create a nightmare scenario for Taylor. He casually makes the telling description of his pyjamas often soaked through with sweat after another football nightmare (one of which has been compiled here). He fends off a hostile press by addressing their fantasy football notions: "my teams have to play; your selections never carry that risk of responsibility." He sticks by an often out of shape Gazza in the face of criticism. Playing him in the 2-0 defeat at Oslo, Taylor noted that "whether he's 13 stone or 10 stone the Norwegian players are in awe of him." And in Gazza's defence, at a knuckle rapping session at Lancaster Gate, he shut up the F.A. worriers, telling them that part of 'The Gazza Problem' was that far too much time was spent talking about him.

An accomplished ex-manager of Aston Villa (and currently managing Wolves), Taylor is well aware of the difficulties of being a 'good' manager. It's all very well to play beautiful football but "if you consistently play well and lose games" he says, "you don't stay in the job ... My advice to the next England manager is just make sure that you don't lose."

'Do I Not Like That' has other 'Taylor-as-sage' moments. On a prison visit he questions whether youngsters should play so much youth football and suffer early burnout; his philosophy on restart set-pieces (culminating in my favourite bit: Stuart Pearce's free against Poland executed exactly as it had been done in training); and his embracing of African and Asian nations' football, unlike many of his predecessors. It also features many humorous moments - mainly featuring Gazza, and cameos of the team at work and play, inane bench banter and both sides of press conferences. If you

want to know the working of an international manager's mind, discover a bit of football history and understand why Graeme Souness had open heart surgery, watch 'Do I Not Like That'.

- Paul Power

MANHATTAN MURDER MYSTERY

104 min. Tri-Star pictures. Dir Woody Allen with Woody Allen, Diane Keaton, Alan Alda and Angelica Houston.

Combine the classic thriller genre with a dare I say 'classic' Woody Allen comedy and what do you have? A light-hearted mystery full of one-liners with the proscribed Woody Allen sub-plot: a neurotic man, Larry (Allen), has a neurotic relationship (marriage, in this case) with a neurotic woman, Carol (Diane Keaton). When Carol's suspicion of a neighbour's seemingly natural death escalates into a murder investigation encouraged by their mutual but rather flirtatious friend Ted (Alda), Larry begins to wonder if the 'mystery' is not lending itself to the breakdown of his marriage. Enter Angelica Houston, as Marsha, a vampish author with a keen sense for human nature and possibly, a knack for piecing together murder mysteries. Upon her subtle recommendation, Larry enters the shennanigans of his wife's now fully fledged amateur murder investigation. From this point on, Allen pulls the audience into a thriller complete with heart-stopping surprises and adrenalin-pumping escapes, visual gags and a couple of plot twists leading to a conclusion only as complicated as the film's unstinted series of one-liners.

Dizzying hand-held camera shots and plenty of zooms take the place of quick cuts, a style which on the one hand lends action to some otherwise visually dull scenes and on the other hand takes advantage of this thriller-comedy genre to throw in a dose of visual slapstick. We zoom to the possible killer's face and then to the face of our sleuth, Carol; now we know something is about to happen. Allen makes us wait in Hitchcock fashion for the proverbial 'bomb' of suspense to go off, as we wait to see if our heroine will get caught.

The finale, frantic, eerily beautiful and set backstage of a repertory cinema, rewards the audience for their patience as this movie tends to blandly wander through its early phase, painstakingly setting the audience up for the series of plot twists which conclude Allen's black comedy. There is a certain amount of

cynicism evident in the pace with which the movie is finished off. Because bloodless suspense thrillers, it seems that when we see a clip of the 'Lady from Shanghai', Allen is pointing out that his film mirrors the suspense thriller format to signify the end of, and pay tribute to, the great black and white thriller genre.

By connecting himself to the character of Larry, Allen makes us, 'the public', (not merely 'the audience') doubt the angry accusations flying about in Allen's real-life divorce proceedings as much as we doubt the possibility of any mystery existing in this movie. After all, much of this movie is devoted to the question of whether or not there is any mystery here at all.

- Jill Graves

Z

This film was the Oscar winner for Best Foreign Language Film in 1969. Directed by Costa Gravas, 'Z' tells the story of an unidentified Mediterranean country under a totalitarian regime. 'Z' is based on the 1965 Lambrakis affair, in which the accidental death of a medical professor uncovered a network of police and government corruption. As Greece was under the Generals at the time, the film was shot in Algeria.

Yves Montand plays the leader of a pacifist opposition party, who, following a political meeting, is knocked down by a van and dies after undergoing brain surgery. An investigation opens and a magistrate (Jean-Louis Trintignant) is assigned to the case. The death is treated as murder when he discovers a secret organisation supported by the government and police. Despite threats from every side, with his life in danger, the Magistrate pursues his investigations until he eventually accuses the General and the Colonel of the Gendarmerie of aiding and abetting the assassination.

This film is highly enjoyable and in spite of its serious subject matter, very entertaining. As a film for the nineties, 'Z' is arguably a bit dated but this makes the film all the more endearing now, especially with its catchy film score from Mikis Theodorakis. With a script by Spaniard Jorge Sempram, the re-creation of the murder and subsequent investigation has all the ingredients of a good thriller and uses those techniques to gripping effect.

On the serious side, 'Z' deals with conspiracies, corruption, violence and intimidation, all the things that perhaps makes governments and states tick. Not new in 1969 and not new now in 1994. Women, sadly do

not get much to say in 'Z'. In fact, Irene Papas seems to be dumb ('Z's significant other). A shame really, but then of course women are only about 50% of the population.

Albeit, it goes to show that the quest for justice needs friends in high places. The story of 'Z' is a familiar one. Everyone involved being inexorably linked in the chain of circumstances, leading to Z's assassination and its consequences. By the way, Z is the ancient Greek for he is alive.

- C.L.

HEAVEN AND EARTH

(Dir. Oliver Stone, with Tommy Lee Jones, Joan Chen, Haing S. Ngor.)

I don't like Oliver Stone's films and, for a multitude of reasons, I don't expect I ever will. There will be no surprises then in this review; no conversions on the road to Damascus (or should that be Saigon?), no happy endings (like in the movies) where your humble critic (duly humbled) comes away from the cinema irreparably changed, and rides off into the sunset to proclaim Stone's genius. If you're a committed Stone fan - and you should be (committed that is) - you might wish to avoid this critical impasse and read something else. Alternatively I'll offer you an easy way out and give you the gist of my rant in a nutshell. The article begins like this: "Oliver Stone is as subtle as a sledgehammer." It ends like this, "Stoned again." (The rest of you may now read on.)

Oliver Stone is as subtle as sledgehammer. All of his films start out being powerfully megalomaniac and end up being pitifully melodramatic. Or, if you like, his outrage begins as a howl only to melt into a purr. An uneasy tension exists in his work where genuine anger and pathos is sacrificed on the altar of entertainment and bathos, he starts out with an epic and ends up with a cartoon.

Part of the problem seems to be his giddy grasp of impressive imagery which gets overthrown by some rather soggy symbolism. Remember *Platoon* (the first in his Vietnam trilogy) with its mythic battle between the good sergeant and the evil sergeant as they fight for control of the rookie's soul? The scene where the good guy gets killed is choreographed like a macabre ballet. From the perspective of a departing helicopter we watch breathlessly as our white knight staggers through the jungle in beautiful slo-mo, with half the Vietcong on his tail. The overwhelming sense of helplessness, confusion and impending death is visually enthralling and dynamically conveyed until the moment when the



• Tommy Lee Jones stars in Oliver Stone's epic drama *Heaven & Earth*

hero finally dies, arms akimbo, stretched out like a crucified Christ. Subtle, huh? Stone can never resist the overkill of the hammer-heavy symbol, effectively crushing the fragility of the human moment he intends to convey. In one foul swoop a gritty grunt tale dissolves into a maudlin morality parable about the forces of good versus evil. And again, in *Born on the Fourth of July*, he falls into the same trap. Our all-American hero, Tom Cruise (who else?), starts out as patriotic fool waving his stars and stripes and espousing the virtues of mom's apple pies only to end up an embittered paraplegic. That's grand until Stone the moralist insists on redemption, and like a messianic mechanic tries to repair the broken American dream. In an unconvincing and laboured transition he leaves us with a long-haired Tom happily waving his little flag again, but this time it's at a Democratic party convention which looks like an ad for Bill Clinton. What starts out full of visceral potential ends up a mess of mawkish clichés.

Most of his films follow a conventional, paint-by-numbers pattern. Act 1 is the age of blissful innocence just begging to be napalmed; Act 2 is the depiction of war (where Stone truly excels); Act 3

is the lingering nightmare as the hero wanders in the desert; and Act 4 is the inevitable Hollywood catharsis, the happy-ever-after blanket of smugness that wraps everybody up in cosy 1960's nostalgia - you've seen the war, now buy the soundtrack.

Heaven and Earth is no different except that this time its central viewpoint is one that Stone cannot possibly hope to understand. It tells the story of Le Ly, a peasant existence ripped asunder by war. After the predictable litany of atrocity (torture, rape, murder of her family), she ends up in the States married to the stereotypical psychotic veteran (the ever reliable Tommy Lee Jones), finally becoming a kind of Imelda Marcos caricature.

Stone means well but he lacks genuine intellectual depth. The surface images are pretty but ultimately degenerate into sickly soap-opera symbols that we've all seen before (and which weren't much cop the first time out). Throughout he attempts to convey a culture he cannot understand, yet feels obliged (out of liberal guilt) to eulogise. Paradoxically, his patronising attitudes lean uncomfortably close to the original imperial world-view which got the Americans into

Continued from page 28

Vietnam in the first place.

Le Ly's Buddhism is presented as a metaphor for stoic karmic destiny. She believes she must suffer in this life to atone for sins in a previous existence, and this, you feel, is Stone's sub-textual agenda - New Age mysticism meets American foreign policy. Her voice-over monologues (a favourite Stone device) are full of that puerile fortune-cookie wisdom that emerges whenever Hollywood tries to imagine the oriental mindset, and which can become offensive in its blandness. Hey you guys, even gooks have souls!

The overall product is much the same; a confused mix of good intention and feeble execution which is occasionally harrowing but mostly self-indulgent and counterproductive. Stone, you feel, would like to invoke the spirit of Ghandi but resurrects instead the spirit of Gunga Din.

In a similar vein, you suspect that Stone would dearly love to make an anti-war movie that would equal the likes of Kubrick's *Paths of Glory*, *Dr. Stangelove* or *Full Metal Jacket*. Instead, you know all along that he's better suited to gung-ho vehicles like *Rambo*. At any rate, maybe Stone has finally exorcised his guilty ghosts and got the Saigon syndrome out of his system - but I doubt it. Stoned again.

- Keith Hopper

THE ART OF DIGITAL VIDEO

With the ever lowering cost of digital technology, the increased functionality of chips, and the advantages that signal processing offers us in the digital domain that are denied to us in the analog domain, it is clear, as John Watkinson pointed out in his book, *The Art of Digital Video* that "analog equipment can no longer compete economically and it will dwindle away as surely as the transistor once replaced the vacuum tube in electronics". To all engineers still grappling with the understanding of analog circuits that cause such effects as differential phase distortion, please remember the quality of reproduction in a digital video is independent of the medium, and also in electronic engineering "dwindle" is a very short time!

As an Engineer who is constantly comparing the specification of different machines, I find that the strength of a book like Watkinson's *The Art Of Digital Video*, is that it

gives a clear and concise definition of the terminology used in the measurement of signals and the performance of equipment. An example of this would be terms like residual B.E.R. (bit error rate) and raw B.E.R., codewords and data, F.I.R. and I.T.R. filters, etc. Unambiguous text supported by clearly labelled diagrams combine to make it an ideal reference book, especially for people like myself who find themselves returning again and again to such text books, as the memory forgets theory once learned in college. I must add that it is not a book for the lay person as it assumes a certain level of knowledge on the part of the reader and although he promises the minimum possible amount of mathematics, a knowledge of binary coding, two's complement and logic elements is essential.

- Seosamh Mac Donnacha

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Dreams and Realities - A Middle Ground

Section 35, of the Finance Act, 1987 (as amended by Section 28 of the Finance Act, 1989 and more recently by Section 48 of the Finance Act, 1993) has created a huge amount of interest particularly over the past years. At this stage, there should be no need to go into the basic details which are available throughout the country in the various information centres including the Film Board, Media Desk, Media Antenna, Galway Film Centre and Film Base. A lot of accountancy firms and legal practises will also provide the essential information and there are a number of industry reports which outline the incentive in great detail.

However, how does the film-maker realistically avail of this incentive? Is there a huge pot of gold at the end of the rainbow for anybody with great ideas for developing films and television programmes which qualify for tax investment? The short answer is no. Generally speaking, Section 35 investment does not provide development funding for film projects.

While the quality of the screenplay should always be the backbone of any film, it is the 'package' (to use that terrible word) which will interest the film accountant/lawyer. Of course, it helps a lot if you have an established writer/director/producer attached to your project and have a track record in the business. But the bottom line is that you have a better chance of attracting investment in 'Friday 13th: Part X - Jason Comes to Galway', with a 80-90% pre-sale from Schlock distributors Limited than with a high quality creative project with development funding from Bord Scannán or the European Script Fund but which has yet to attract production funding.

That is not to say that you might not get tax money for the latter, but the reality is that film is a commodity from a tax perspective and the investors will always back projects which provide the highest return on their investments.

That said, some of the film accountants/lawyers in Ireland have put a lot into the film industry here over the last few years before the various incentives now available were introduced, improved (or reconstituted!) and will usually have introductory meetings with aspiring film makers on a 'no fee' basis. With this in mind the film-maker should always take advantage of these situations by thorough preparation. Talking about great ideas for a film is a bad start. Where is the script? First doubts already creeping in. Your uncle is a banker from Manhattan with access to a multi-million pound film investment consortium. Hmmm.

By the time you have explained that you need a letter of commitment to activate this new Zambian tax subsidy scheme which has no strings attached, our fictitious accountant's eyes will be glazed over (except for the furtive glances at his/her watch). When you tell them that you met Gabriel Byrne for a drink and gave him your script, they'll make their excuses and leave.

Before the tax investor even thinks about investing in any project, the following information would have to be in place;

- 1. Outline Revenue Approval**
The investor would have to be satisfied that the scheme had received approval from the Revenue Commissioners.
- 2. Due Diligence**
Production Company track record.
- 3. Production Details**
Information regarding the specific project details for example, the script, director, producer, schedule, budget, completion bond etc.
- 4. Pre-Sales**
The investor would have to be satisfied with the terms and conditions of the various pre-sale contracts and distribution details.

The film-maker should always focus on the above details for any presentation to a prospective investor or tax broker. Ideally points three and four should be addressed (ie at least thought about) before approaching any organisation for funding. Of course, there still has to be those elements of bluff, hype and glitz that move any project. But there is a middle ground between the facts, figures and return on investment ratios of the accountancy world and the less specific (dare I say vague?) generalities of the speculative film world. Let's face it, the film accountant is not going to get anywhere if he waits behind the desk

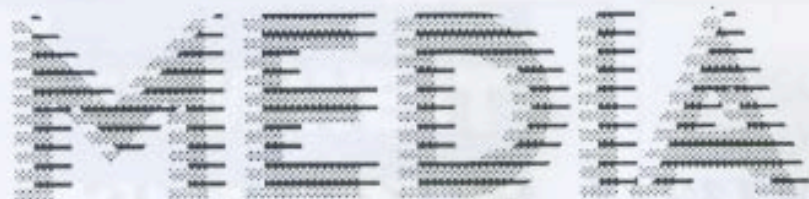
for an asset backed 90% pre-sale to arrive. The key is for both parties to bring something to the table.

Speaking of chickens and eggs one of the other major problems facing independent film-makers is cash flow. Cash flow. The term is a cliché at this stage. Only when you experience cash flow problems do you realise its significance. You may well have a 100% financed film but your problems are only beginning. 30% is not payable until the rough cut viewing with the balance due on delivery. Out of the other money which you may have managed to raise for first day of principal photography, you may have to pay three months of outstanding pre-production bills. And worse still, the Film Board are on the telephone asking for their development loan back.

Which brings me to the banks. If, over the next three years, the banks eventually start discounting pre-sale contracts and providing essential cash flow to independent companies (and making good money on the interest), the film industry here will have made another major step. The problem at the moment is the way the banks assess film projects. Production companies are, by their very nature, 'body shops' with light balance sheet and where the key assets are the people in them. Unfortunately, talent is an intangible element which bankers cannot (and are not expected to) assess. However, a water-tight pre-sale contract requiring discounting facilities is a valuable security and the banks are missing out on a significant opportunity to make good money and build up a solid business. Meanwhile, the banks in London provide specialised film finance services to Irish production companies. As David Puttnam once said; "I can understand why the banks are cautious about lending to film companies as each deal is different, but, after 60 years of film making, there is no excuse for them not knowing about the business." Correct. The banks must become more media literate and then they will gradually learn to differentiate between good and bad projects.

Mind you, as I'm sure Mr. Puttnam will verify, there are some problems on a production that you can't account for. The war of the buttocks goes on.

— James Flynn is Business Manager of Bord Scannán na hÉireann



european film college

For those interested in the European Film College and looking for more of an insight into what's happening there, you might be interested in taking a look at 'The Final Cut' a comprehensive yearbook of the college 1993-94. Available from the Antenna office.

babel

Martin Hensel from BABEL, will be at the "Teanga" session of the Galway Film Fleadh (10.00 am Friday 15th) and at the "Film Shop" 14th-15th July.

eave

EAVE have brought out a glossy and valuable reference guide to all their graduates (250) in a country-by-country listing in addition to an interesting list of names of those who contributed to the success of EAVE in each country. The Directory will be updated every two years. Order forms for the EAVE 1994 Directory are available (20 ecus for EAVE graduates and 30 ecus for non-graduates). Application forms for the 1995 EAVE training programme are available at the Antenna.

cartoon

The 11th funding session for pre-production aid in May saw 28 projects selected. Among them was one Irish project, "Tangle" by the Dublin based ALEGRO company, which received 20,000 ECU. The fifth Cartoon Forum takes place in the Azores, Portugal, 22-24 September 1994 during which, among many other events, the Cartoon d'Or screenings (worth 35,000Ecu's) will take place.

efdo

New guidelines in EFDO have resulted in changes in the maximum amount for production costs meaning that EFDO will support the distribution of films with production costs of up to 5 million ECU. Instead of three categories EFDO now has two production categories. Category I: 30% of the distribution fund is to be reserved for films with production costs of up to 1,500,000 ECU. Category II: 70% of the fund to be reserved for films with production costs between 1,500,000 ECU and 5,000,000.

EFDO supported 96 distribution campaigns for 16 films in 18 EFDO countries during their last funding session to the tune of 4,103,10 ECU. Mike Newell's "FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL" was awarded distribution support for nine countries. EFDO Chairman, Dieter Kosslick and Ute Schneider EFDO's Secretary General will be at the Fleadh.

media business school

Following its launch last November, twelve projects are currently in development with ACE. The second ACE contract period will start from September 1994. Twelve producers will be selected for this session. Initial applications should be received by the end of June and after preliminary assessment, producers will be invited to submit full applications by the end of July. The final selection will be made in the first week of September 1994.

ACE is open to European producers who have produced at least one, but preferably two or more feature films or feature-length television dramas. Applicants must also have a feature film project in active development and they must be residents of and have a company registered in member states of the EU or with in EFTA who have subscribed to the MEDIA programme.

Colin Young is Director of ACE. David Puttnam is President and Dieter Kosslick and René Cleitman are vice presidents.

film business school

The 4 day "Film Business School" workshop, which is an intensive training course on film

financing and co-productions, will take place in Madrid from 1-4th December 1994. Deadline for applications is 28th October 1994.

16:9 action plan

A presentation by representatives of the Action Plan for 16:9 will take place at 1.00 pm in The Ardilaun Hotel, Galway, as part of the Galway Film Fleadh. This will allow you to ask questions about the financial assistance available for 16:9 and also to see a visual presentation of 16:9 supported projects.

euro aim

As a result of a decision taken during the Cannes Film Festival, EURIMAGES and EURO AIM have decided to exchange, on a permanent basis, information on European co-production project files submitted by producers to Euro Aim as well as to EURIMAGES.

The EURO AIM Donostia Screenings promise to be exceptional this year with 102 buyers from 24 countries viewing over 300 recent European independent productions. MEDIA supported projects will be screened and two new mediabases: the Buyer's Mediabase and Distributor's Media base will provide further assistance to independent producers. A sixth mediabase; The Financier's Mediabase will be launched at the Rendez-Vous of Finance & Coproduction in Babelsberg from 23-26 September.

Compiled by Dairena Ni Chinnéide
MEDIA Antenna Galway.

Further information:

MEDIA Antenna Galway, 4 High Street, Galway.	MEDIA Desk Ireland, 6 Eustace Street, Dublin 2.
Tel: 353.91.67262 Fax: 353.91.66728	Tel: 01-6795744 Fax: 01-6799657

MEDIA Deadlines

CD		1 October
Interactive Television		1 July
SCALE	* TBC 1995	
MAP-TV		10 August
LUMIERE		30 September
EFDO		1 August 1 November
EVE	3 July	
GRECO	15 May	
EURO AIM		
Rendez Vous	30 June	
MIPCOM		1 September
BABEL	*	
MEDIA SALLES	15 June	
EUROPA CINEMA	30 June	30 Mei
EUROPEAN FILM ACADEMY	*	
EURO MEDIA GARANTIES	*	
EURIMAGES	7 July	22 September 1 December
EUREKA	20 July	5 October 7 December
ACTION PLAN 16/9		

P L A N D ' A C T I O N



**EUROPEAN UNION: ACTION PLAN
FOR THE INTRODUCTION
OF ADVANCED TELEVISION SERVICES IN EUROPE**

WHAT IS THE 16/9 ACTION PLAN?

A Community support programme for the introduction of advanced television services in Europe.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE?

To accelerate the development of the 16/9 market.

HOW TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE?

- Encourage broadcasters to launch or consolidate 16/9 services.
- Encourage independent producers and broadcasters to produce 16/9 programmes.

BY WHICH MEANS?

By contributing to the additional costs linked to broadcasting and producing in the 16/9 format.

HOW TO APPLY?

The European Commission publishes one call for proposals per year for broadcasting services and three for programme production. The deadline for this call for proposals for programme production is 15th September 94. For further information please contact the Commission Services under the following addresses and phone/fax numbers and/or during the Galway Film Fleadh.



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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CULTURE, AUDIOVISUAL
AUDIOVISUAL POLICY**

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AND EXPLOITATION OF RESEARCH
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AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA**
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B-1049 BRUSSELS / BELGIUM
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FILM QUIZ

Part 1 THE PLAYER

1. What did Kevin Costner call his pet wolf in *Dances with Wolves*?
2. Who played Sakini, the Okinawan interpreter, in *Teahouse of the August Moon*?
3. Name the character played by Linda Hamilton in the Terminator films?
4. What famous screen role was played by Aileen Quinn?
5. What is Scotty's first name in *Star Trek*?
6. What nickname do they give the serial killer in *Silence of the Lambs*?
7. Name the character played by Tony Curtis in *The Boston Strangler*?
8. And the character played by Burt Lancaster in *Sweet Smell of Success*?
9. Who played "Deep Throat" in *All the President's Men*?
10. Who played the female lead in *Runaway Train*?

Part 2: "You talkin' to Me?"

Part 2 YOU TALKIN' TO ME?

1. "Fill your hands, you sonofabitch" John Wayne. Name the movie.
2. "Whaddya gonna do? Kill me? Everybody dies" John Garfield. Name the movie.
3. What are you rebelling against? "What have you got?" Name the film in which this exchange takes place.
4. "Don't get too close to people, you'll catch their dreams" Martin Landau. The film?
5. "The pink elephant, if you please" Liam Neeson. Film, please.
6. "I believe... Oswald acted alone" Kevin Costner. Name the

- film.
7. "You won't breathe nothin'... not even air" George Raft. Film?
 8. "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers" Vivien Leigh. Name the film.
 9. "Lunch is for wimps" Name the film that spawned this mercifully short-lived catchphrase.
 10. "A sphincter says what" Ditto.



Name the actress...

Part 3 THE CRITICS SPEAK

1. According to one critic this film offered Rupert Everett "hilariously typecast as a talentless wanker." It was Richard Marquand's last directorial outing. Title please.
2. Groucho Marx described it as "The only movie I ever saw in which the male leads tits were bigger than the female's." It starred Victor Mature and Hedy Lamarr. Name it.
3. Name the Nicholas Ray film disparagingly referred to as "I was a Teenage Jesus"?
4. "The length of a film should be directly related to the endurance of the human bladder" What famous director offered this succinct criticism?
5. "If a story makes me cry, it's good" Which movie mogul dispensed his wisdom thus?
6. "The most perverse movie musical ever made..." One of the kinder things written about Peter Bogdanovich's 1975 effort. Name it.
7. "The success of this film will be

- found in naked thighs of Miss Dietrich" Heinrich (New) Mann to Emil Jennings. To what production was he referring?
8. The screen-test notes about this actor read: "Can't act. Can't sing. Can dance a little." Name him.
 9. Howard Hughes described this star as having ears that made him look like "a taxicab with both doors open." Who is he?
 10. About whose performance did Dorothy Parker famously quip "She ran the gamut of emotions from A to B?"
- Actress in 1970. Who is she?
9. He won the Best Foreign Actor Bafta in 1952, 1953 and 1954. Who is he?
 10. "1969, the end of the greatest decade in history, one long sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll party - but..." Who didn't get an invitation?

Part 5 PUBLICITY BLURBS

Identify the films referred to by the messages emblazoned on their posters.

Part 4 GENERAL

1. Which 1980's film used 300,000 extras for a two minute sequence?
 2. Groucho, Chico, Harpo. Name the other 3 Marx Bros.?
 3. Who directed the groundbreaking documentary *Titicut Follies*?
 4. What was Will Sampson's first line of dialogue in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*?
 5. How many trombones led the big parade in *The Music Man* [1952]?
 6. "Egghead weds Hourglass" ran the headlines. Name the bride and groom.
 7. What 1951 film found Kirk Douglas exploiting the journalistic possibilities of a man trapped in a rockfall?
 8. She won a Best Actress Oscar in 1932 and a Best Supporting
1. A Story For Everyone Who Works For A Living.
 2. The adventures of an ordinary man at war with the everyday world.
 3. He loved the American Dream with a vengeance.
 4. Sam Bowden has always provided for his family's future. But the past is coming back to haunt them.
 5. A film where women eat men and men eat ham.
 6. "Whatever it takes to have a nice day."
 7. Between Heaven and Hell there's always Hollywood.
 8. A story of love, revenge and gazpacho.
 9. It's the hottest day of the summer. You can do nothing, you can do something, or you can...
 10. Everyone has a dark side: Henry's about to meet his.



Name the film...

Questions compiled by Noel Mc Gee, The Movie Club

INFACT

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The directors John Huston; Elia Kazan; Sergei Eisenstein; Tod Browning; Martin Scorsese; Federico Fellini; Woody Allen; Ingmar Bergman; Quentin Tarantino (when the censor's allow); Francis Coppola; Spike Lee; Pedro Almodovar; Jean-Jacques Beineix; David Lynch; Clint Eastwood; Luis Bunuel; The Majestic Coen Brothers; Hal Hartley; The Godlike Ken Loach; Jean-Luc Godard; Bertrand Blier; Mike Leigh; Jane Campion; Jim Jarmusch; Stanley Kubrick; Fritz Lang; David Lean; Gillian Armstrong; Paul Cox; Michael Brennan; Robert Bresson; Euzhan Palcy; Wim Wenders; Roberto Rossellini; Ida Lupino; Luchino Visconti; Robert Altman etc ... etc ...

And, of course those who feel the auteur theory stinks The Players; the writers; the photographers; the cinematographers; the editors; the musicians; the make-up artists; the art directors; the set directors; the "czar of the rushes", Fats O'Connor; the costumiers; even the producers!

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