

## COMMUNITY

By David Hennessy

**S**hout London, Cricklewood and Kilburn's annual mental health film and arts festival, has been confirmed for London next year and, for the first time, Liverpool.

This year's event, the second, was held at the Kiln Theatre in Kilburn and the Crown Hotel in Cricklewood.

It is supported by local charity Ashford Place, (formerly Cricklewood Homeless), which is funded by various local authorities and partially funded by the Irish government's Emigrant Support Programme.

Festival organiser Carey Fitzgerald told *The Irish World*: "We can't believe the support that we've had for this event. It's been fabulous."

"We now are about to launch Shout Liverpool and we're going to be building from there."

"We've had enquiries about Shout Melbourne so people from other countries are getting in touch, so it's going to be global."

"It's really brilliant. Everyone is talking about mental health. That's the most important thing."

Radio 4 Broadcaster Peter Curran presented the festival.

He said: "It's gone brilliantly from the point of view of hearing amazing life stories, lived experience from campaigners, artists, musicians."

"That sort of breadth of human experience and wisdom coming off a lot of the contributors has been a real eye opener for this cynical old journalist."

"It's a real privilege because you're dealing with people who are being very open and telling their difficult personal life stories."

"So, it was a real privilege to be involved in it."

"This had an awful lot of personal resonance for me, particularly coming from Ireland."

"Some of the stories interlocked with the difficulties my own family had faced and perhaps didn't talk about an awful lot in previous generations, so I came away from the festival with a lot of food for thought really about my own life."

Among the events in Kilburn was a performance by actress, singer, dancer and writer Maria McAteer of scenes from

her one-woman show *The Guinness Girl* with Alice Beadle on the violin.

It was followed by a feature documentary on young people's mental health by Ben Akers called *Our Kids Our Lives*.

Ben Akers told *The Irish World*: "It's really, really great to be here to be in such a supportive environment."

"We're trying to create conversation because it's a subject we don't want to talk about."

"We don't want to think about suicide and mental ill health in children - but suicide is the biggest killer of men under 50. In reality, it's the biggest killer of males from nine to 50."

"You don't want to think about a nine-year-old taking his own life - but it is happening."

His earlier film, *Steve*, was about a friend who took his own life.

"It was after the suicide of my childhood best friend, a bloke called Steve Yates and I realised that he wasn't a number. He wasn't a statistic. He was a friend, he was a father, he was a son, he was a brother."

"What we wanted to do was try and save the next Steve."

Ben established the Talk Club community to get men talking.

"We're trying to build a community of men to connect with each other."

"Men have the biggest rates of suicide - a man dies every 90 minutes in the UK but if we can get there even earlier, if we can get young men and young women even earlier to start opening up about how they're feeling, then hopefully we can start attacking the suicide rates and we can start getting them down."

Maddie Kitchen screened a short film *Say Something*, about a teenager's alcohol dependence and poor mental health while still at school.

She told *The Irish World*: "Everybody that works at Sobriety Films has lived experience. They're in recovery from addiction, mental health, or trauma, or all of them. We exist to give people a voice who don't have a voice."

"This kind of festival is really important because it's community, but it's also wider than that."

"It's awareness raising, and



then de-stigmatising. It's an amazing celebration."

Singer-songwriter-musician Sacha Wood, whose mother comes from Dublin, performed some of her music.

Sacha and Maria McAteer have experience of Depersonalisation Personality Disorder, which they discussed with Peter Curran on stage.

Maria McAteer told *The Irish World*: "It was lovely talking to Sacha. She's the first person I've ever met who has had the same DPDR."

"It was just fantastic to connect with somebody who's gone through the same things."

"It (DPDR) didn't have a label (when I was younger), it didn't have a name. I thought that I was going insane. I couldn't explain it to anybody."

"The doctors didn't even know what it was then."

"I can't even imagine what it might have been like if I'd met Sacha back then."

Sacha said: "It's just been really cool to get to perform and in the context of mental health and mental health awareness."

"It's the first time that I've really properly spoken out about it (DPDR), so this was amazing to be able to be on stage and with someone else who knows exactly what the feeling is and just talk about it with such a welcoming and understanding and attentive audience and atmosphere as well."

"Just knowing that you're not alone is such a key step forward to solving things or being able to cope with them or accepting them, accepting yourself. It's just so crucial."

To close events in at the Kiln in Kilburn, poet Wendy Young recited her verse and record producer and musician

Ronald Amanze spoke about living with dementia.

Moving to the Crown in Cricklewood, the focus switched to neurodiversity.

Multi-media artist Yasmin Nicholas, who screened her short film *Shells without an Echo*, told us: "It feels wonderful to be in this festival, being able to be around a lot of people who have been able to express their situations through art through poetry through music as well."

"It gives that lovely warm feeling of knowing that whatever the issues are, whatever your situations are - different mental health situations - just to know that you're not alone is wonderful."

"I can't wait for what Shout's going to do next. We need more of this."

Two films about eating disorders were screened, including a short documentary presented by Shout London patron, EastEnders and Coronation Street actor Michelle Collins. She is also patron of PEDS (Personalised Eating Disorder Support) in Peterborough.

Michelle told *The Irish World*: "It's great to be back a second year and see the festival get bigger and better. It's fantastic."

"I've been a patron of an eating disorder charity called PEDS for a long, long time. I had an eating disorder when I was very young and I managed to deal with it, but there are so many people, men and women, suffering from eating disorders particularly more since lockdown, and it's something that really needs to be addressed."

"A lot of people don't think it's as bad as it is, it can be fatal."

(ABOVE) Maria McAteer performing scenes from her show *Guinness Girl* accompanied by Alice Beadle on the violin and (BELOW) EastEnders and Coronation Street actor Michelle Collins arriving at The Crown in Cricklewood



"We really need to try and understand it."

"It doesn't have to mean death for people. If they get the right treatment, they can live a good life."

"It is just so important that we look after our mental health."

"We need to talk more. It's communication, not feeling ashamed to tell people how you're feeling and to bring it out in the open."

"When I was much younger, people didn't talk like they do now so it's very, very important."

The short film *Disordered* by Alice Wallis was also screened, which showed the effects on a family when one member is suffering from an eating disorder.

Joshua Nunn recited poetry and joined a neurodivergence discussion of ADHD with Dominique Murphy-de Neef (both of whom have experience of ADHD) and Peter Curran.

It was followed by a music video, *Talk it Out*, by Neil Avery and Nigel Planer followed by discussion of neurodiversity, creativity and mental health.

Neil Avery said: "It was such a joy hearing people's stories and backgrounds and other things that I'm not aware of. When you start talking to people, you notice there's a lot of similarities and it's very humbling."

Jon Salmon said: "We need festivals like this, because it's bringing creative people together, it's breaking down the stigma that exists around different things whether it's mental health, neurodiversity, trauma - festivals like this, you see the talent first, not the struggle that we all sometimes suffer."

"That's what's so wonderful about Shout London."

The festival ended with a discussion with Sean Kaluarachchi, who works in the London Irish Centre's Survivors Service, which supports survivors of Mother and Baby homes and County Homes ahead of the forthcoming redress scheme.

An accomplished musician who performs around London, Liverpool and his home city of Belfast, Sean closed the festival with his singing and playing the acoustic guitar.

Sean said: "It's just a great initiative."

"Music is another link to my dad. With everything he went through in the Troubles, his one escape was playing music."

"He said while the riots and everything was going on outside his doorstep, he would just plug in his guitar and just batter away."

"I tried to carry that on, it's good for mental health."

"There's not enough festivals like this that really provide a voice to people suffering from (poor) mental health and those who advocate for those who suffer from (poor) mental health, so long may it continue."

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## FILM

COMING UP ▶ Letters

**I**rish Film & Television UK (IFTUK), formerly known as Irish Film London, has announced the line-up of its annual flagship festival.

The Irish Film Festival London programme includes the latest Irish feature films, documentaries, animation and short films.

It will run between 15-19 November at several venues including the Vue West End, Vue Piccadilly and the London Irish Centre.

The festival opens with the UK premiere of *One Night in Millstreet*, from two-time Irish Film and Television Academy Award winner, Andrew Galloway.

It is a snapshot of a country on the edge of change, viewed through the 1995 prize fight between underdog Steve 'The Celtic Warrior' Collins and undefeated world champion Chris 'Simply the Best' Eubank.

Stories by and about women are at the heart of this year's festival. The longest industrial dispute in Ireland's history is the subject of Joe Lee's multiple award-winning *406 Days - The Debenhams Picket Line*.

In April 2020, Debenhams sacked its staff by generic email and reneged on promised union-negotiated redundancy packages.

The mostly female workforce refused to accept this.

Director Patricia Kelly's debut feature *Verdigris* is about an unlikely friendship between Marian (Geraldine McAlinden), an older woman in a loveless marriage, and young sex worker, Jewel (Maya O'Shea).

It won Best Independent Film at this year's Galway Film Fleadh this year.

Ciara Hyland's Irish language documentary *Croíthe Radacacha* (*Radical Hearts*) depicts gay women - committed to feminism, socialism and equal rights - at the heart of the fight for Irish independence from the British Empire.

Festival Director Michael Hayden said: "While films in the festival take on topics including misogyny, sport, history, human rights and language, it is refreshing that all these filmmakers are as keen to entertain as they are to educate. There's no shortage of lightness, humour, compassion and hope here, too."

## Irish Film Festival aims to introduce UK audiences to much more than Irish Oscar winners



"This programme is the first brick in the foundation of a platform for Irish film that IFTUK intends to build in London and across the UK. While I sincerely thank all our partners supporting us in that aim, my greatest appreciation is for the filmmakers. Their vision and voices motivate us to do this."

Director Lisa Mucachy adapts Sheridan Le Fanu's novel *Uncle Silas* in *Lies We Tell* - a spiky, distinctive period piece with a pointed feminist edge about an orphaned heiress (Agnes O'Casey) forced into the guardianship of her menacing Uncle Silas (David Wilmot).

The programme also includes Irish language film *Tarrac*, recently featured in *The Irish World*, which tells the story of Aoife (Kelly Gough) who reluctantly leaves Dublin to return to her home in Kerry Gaeltacht to look after her sick father. The sports drama celebrates female solidarity.

Adapted from Roddy Doyle's novel, playful animation *A Greyhound of a Girl*, directed by Enzo D'Alò (*Pinocchio*), follows 11-year-

old Mary whose passion for cooking brings generations of women in her family together.

Its voice cast includes Brendan Gleeson and Sharon Horgan.

Tomas Vengris' *Five and a Half Love Stories in an Apartment in Vilnius, Lithuania* presents various moving stories of love and tragedy from an Airbnb apartment.

It is a Screen Ireland co-production with the Lithuanian and Latvian film bodies and features music by Irish composer Stephen Rennicks (*The Quiet Girl*).

The first feature to be restored through the Irish Film Institute and Screen Ireland Digitisation Project, *Reefer and the Model* (Ireland, 1988) is a road movie, presenting Ireland at a crossroads - questioning whether it can reject the violence of its past and be reborn.

This 2023 Director's Cut celebrates the contribution made by Joe Comerford to Irish Cinema.

*Face Down: The Disappearance of Thomas Niedermayer*, directed by Gerry Greg, is about the Christmas 1973 kidnapping of

(FROM LEFT) *One Night in Millstreet* showing a country going through change told through the lens of the Michael Collins-Chris Eubank boxing match, the award-winning documentary *406 Days - The Debenhams Picket Line* and Irish language documentary *Croíthe Radacacha*



the managing director of the Grundig Factory in Belfast, a devoted family man.

The film illustrates how acts of violence remain far beyond the moments they are committed.

Director John Carlin's *Lie of the Land* won the Best Irish First Feature Award at the Galway Film Fleadh. It is about a middle-aged couple living on a small farm crippled with debt.

A newcomer appears to come to their rescue - but events take a dark turn.

Director Ciara Nic Chormaic's *O Bhéal*, shot in black and white, features Irish language singer-songwriters who use hip hop and electronics.

Irish Film & TV UK Festival Director Michael Hayden said: "A lot of people will talk about the Banshees of Inisherin or *An Irish Goodbye* winning the Oscar, or the success of *The Quiet Girl*, all of which deserve to be celebrated, as does all the TV production that goes on over there."

"At the same time there's a hell of a lot of work that is just not

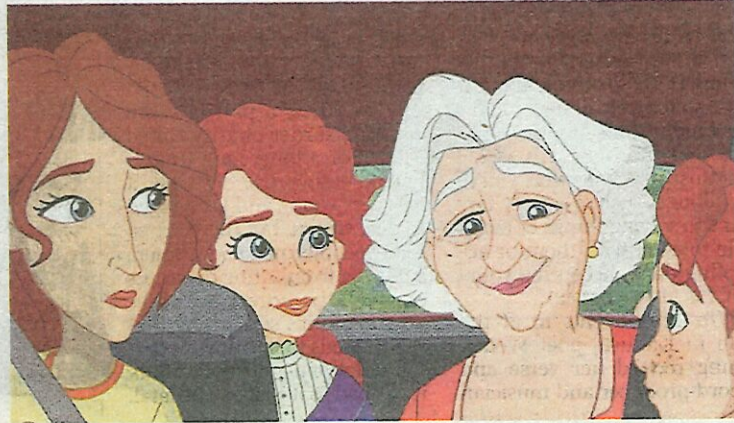
being seen in the UK - we can celebrate more."

Michael added: "In such a fascinating and productive era for Irish cinema and television, it is both a thrill and an honour to have the opportunity to offer filmmakers and their work a valuable platform in the UK."

The jury for the 2023 Irish Film Awards will include Colm Bairéad and Cleona Ní Chruaí, director and producer of *The Quiet Girl*; Anna Rodgers and Shaun Dunne, director and producer of *How to Tell a Secret*; Kelly Campbell, director of *An Encounter* and Peter Curran, Steven Greenfield and Tara Gaule. Ros Hubbard will present the Ros Hubbard Best Newcomer Award.

This year's partners are Embassy of Ireland, Screen Ireland and Culture Ireland.

The festival will also include a Screen Ireland shorts programme showcasing the work of emerging talent on Sunday 18 November at Vue Piccadilly. The Irish Film Festival will be followed by the Irish Film & Television UK Awards on 20 November.



(FROM LEFT) Director Lisa Mucachy's feature *Lies We Tell*, animation *A Greyhound of a Girl* and director Patricia Kelly's debut feature *Verdigris*

