

Dungarvan to Cannes: Conversations with a Local Filmmaker

By Kirsten Stoddart



JESSIE KIRBY

JESSIE Kirby has met a lot of people on her travels, from regional filmmakers to film stars, but one person she will always remember is a primary school teacher of hers from the Presentation Convent, Dungarvan.

“I had one teacher called Mrs O’Keeffe, who pushed me to write and gave me the self-belief I needed to go onto what I have achieved. She used to let me read in class; she pushed me and made me believe that I could achieve what I wanted to.”

Twenty years have passed since Kirby began her theatre and film career at the Boomerang Theatre Company in Cork, and she still looks back to Dungarvan when it comes to casting and filming her projects.

“It’s important to me to base my productions in Waterford, and I have received a lot of support so far from Margaret Organ, the Waterford County Council Arts Officer, who has been a great advocate for me in working in and around my community. It’s also important for me to work with local actors, often people who have never even performed before, because they have raw talent which brings a freshness to the stage or screen.”

THEATRE

This was especially evident in Kirby’s latest theatre endeavour, a play called “BRB”, which played at Bank Studios in Dungarvan in July of this year. Three out of four actors were Dungarvan-based, and two were only 16 years old at the time of casting.

“BRB”, which is about four teenagers dealing with relevant issues such as bullying, homophobia, academic, peer and parental pressure, depression and suicide, has just wrapped up its Irish Summer Tour, playing Dublin, Cork, Kilkenny and Limerick.

In 2009, Kirby’s third feature film, “Insatiable,” was released and played film festivals around the world. Funded in part by the Irish Film Board, the Arts Council and the Waterford County Council, “Insatiable” starred Nora Jane Noone, Laura Donnelly and star of “D’Unbelievables” Jon Kenny. This year, “Insatiable” has secured a distribution deal with The Horror Show (www.horrorshow.tv), and Kirby is excited to be in development on her next feature film, a psychological thriller called “The Melody.”

BIGGEST PROJECT TO DATE

“This will be my biggest project to date, and again, this film will be shot in and around the Waterford area, supporting local businesses and nurturing local talent.”

So, what makes Jessie Kirby’s projects special?

“I present work that is confronting, realistic, honest, and, above all, something that an audience can connect and relate to emotionally. My characters are not Hollywood characters; they are real people in situations that ask the age old question: how would you react in a crisis?”

Insatiable is now available for download via www.thehorrorshow.tv

Kirby’s second feature film, “The Hidden”, shot in Dungarvan and starring local teenagers is available to view on Vimeo for free.

See You In Waterford! Says Laureate For Wales Final Countdown to Comeraghs Wild Festival

There will be an influx of Welsh artists to Waterford this weekend as several of our Celtic neighbour’s most respected poets and writers are bound for the inaugural Comeragh Wild Festival, which opens on Thursday (19th September). Young People’s Laureate for Wales Martin Daws, Welsh storyteller Fiona Collins and Wales-based teenage author Lucy Christopher are all headlining workshops and reading events as part of the arts strand to the festival that reflects the historic links between Wales and Waterford’s CopperCoast. They will join a line-up of festival headliners that includes expedition leaders, nature and foraging specialists, heritage experts, musicians, a film maker and even a meditation teacher who are all in the final stages of preparing for a fascinating festival programme.

And with the spotlight firmly on the Comeraghs over the

coming days, it has been confirmed by organisers that some of the festival events have almost sold out, including the intriguing Full Moon Walk and a talk by the talented Gerard Mullen on his award winning garden design, inspired by the majesty of the Comeraghs. There has been strong interest too in Ireland’s first Full Moon Trail Run and recent days have seen a surge of interest in the “wild ways and tall tales” storytelling events in Portlaw and Ballymacarbry.

According to Festival Chairperson Ger Barron, organisers are delighted with the level of interest in the festival from all corners of Ireland and further afield. “What people are really appreciating is that there is something attractive for all the family on the programme – whether it’s walking in the footsteps of our ancestors across the Comeraghs or getting in touch with nature – the ‘Sacred



Gerard Mullen



Dermot Somers

SF Cllr Lays Blame For Junior Doctors’ Strike Action At Government’s Door

A WATERFORD Sinn Fein councillor has blamed Government inaction for the decision of Junior Doctors’ to vote for industrial action, accusing the Coalition of a failure to instigate reforms on hospital staffing and medical training.

Cllr John Hearne said the dispute was “inevitable” given Health Minister James Reilly’s “failure” to implement the European Working Time directive and reduce the “unacceptable” long hours of non-consultant hospital doctors (NCHDs).

“It has been known and widely recognised for years that the hospital system is totally over-reliant on NCHDs. Successive governments have failed to address this over-reliance and this inappropriate staffing and it led to the crisis situation we faced with

the supply of NCHDs in 2011,” he said.

Cllr Hearne asked how long will this “ramshackle structure” stand before it collapses or is replaced by a proper system of medical training and hospital staffing, adding that the system was “flawed enough” without having to bear the brunt of austerity measures and the “widespread budget cuts” being imposed.

He believed that the issue will not be resolved until hospital staffing and medical training are reformed. “This will require more consultants and new grades of consultants and NCHDs to work in our public hospitals, and clear career paths. This cannot be done without also tackling the excessive pay of existing consultants and eliminating double-jobbing in the public-private system.”

Wild’ as we call it. And many events are free”, he commented.

Local hospitality providers such as Hanora’s Cottage, Glasha Farmhouse and a number of hotels in Dungarvan are all offering festival weekend packages.

“There is great national as well as regional media interest in the inaugural Comeraghs Wild Festival. We’re delighted with the focus that has been put on the Comeraghs as a great destination, which is of tremendous value to the Comeragh communities and to the county”, said Mary Houlihan, Tourism Officer for Waterford County Council.

Tickets are still available for festival events which can be [viewed on www.comeraghswild.com](http://www.comeraghswild.com) and bookings are to 058 54975.

COMERAGHS WILD FESTIVAL

The Comeraghs Wild festival will take place in this area this coming weekend. The event will open with a launch at Ballymacarbry Community Centre on Thursday 19th at 8pm. The Tionol an Fhomhair festival will be incorporated into this, when Prof. Pádraig O Macháin will speak about the "Irish language Heritage in the Comeraghs". On Saturday morning Andrew Harrington will lead a field trip entitled - "Where Otters Tread in the Wild". Niall de Búrca will engage in storytelling at the centre at 8pm. "Wild Ways & Tales". There is a EUR5 entry fee for this session. On Sunday there will be a music/poetry/reflection session at the beautiful Nire Church commencing at 11am and following this, local guide Michael Desmond will lead a walk from the Nire to Rathgormack entitled - "Crossing the Wild Comeraghs". Events are also running at localities on all sides of the Comeraghs. Hope to see you at some stage over the weekend.