

Conor
MACNEILL

INVISIBLE SUN

Robert
SHEEHAN

WHEN THE TROUBLES ENDED
THE TRUE FIGHT BEGAN

COMING 2016

from the award winning talent of writer Conor MacNeill, director David Blair and producer Mike Knowles



SYNOPSIS

In a desperate attempt to help save his family's home from repossession a young man turns to running drugs, but following a child's overdose he finds himself pursued by vigilantes including his own unsuspecting father.

CIARAN, a working class Catholic lad, struggles to find his way in post-conflict Belfast. His father MICHAEL, an ex-IRA 'soldier' released after 10 years in prison is unemployed and has turned to drink to come to terms with a changed world at odds with his violent past. Ciaran's mother MARIE has held the family together for the last decade, but her wages as a hospital cleaner have not been enough to keep up with the mortgage; a fact she can no longer hide from the family when the bank calls threatening repossession. Faced with losing everything he holds dear, Ciaran

is lured by the prospect of easy money running pills for local pusher YAZZER, a young, violent and unpredictable gangster.

Ciaran is spotted dealing in the street by two boys SEAMUS and RYAN who playfully swipe his bag. Seamus blackmails Ciaran not to reveal his activities to older sister CLAIRE, a pretty girl with whom Ciaran has been awkwardly flirting for some time. Reluctantly, Ciaran agrees to give them one pill to share to keep them quiet. During a romantic riverside walk Claire reveals her longing to travel the world and as night falls she offers herself to Ciaran. Ciaran's life finally seems on the up; he got laid and he's bringing home the cash that might just save their home.

Then comes news that little Seamus has been found dead, killed by a drug overdose. Ciaran realizes to his horror that some pills went missing when Seamus and Ryan took his bag. His drugs had killed Claire's little brother. Word spreads like wild fire through the council estate where anger over the past is still raw. Frustrated with the current political leadership, a gang of ex-paramilitary vigilantes decide to take matters into their own hands and crack down on the drug dealers; among them is Ciaran's own father who finds new purpose and sense of belonging by bringing swift retribution to drug dealing scum.

Guilt ridden, Ciaran finds himself caught in a double life having to live in the midst of those who are unknowingly both caring for him and hunting him. With

the pressure building and faced with a final foreclosure notice from the bank, Ciaran pulls off one last big drug deal with a dangerous Loyalist gang that will earn thousands of pounds. Meanwhile, following a case of mistaken identity, Michael and the vigilantes accidentally execute Yazzer, but not before he has revealed the truth about Ciaran's activities.

Ciaran's world implodes. At first ecstatic about Ciaran's windfall, Marie rejects her son and the money when he admits where it came from. Confessing to Claire and offering her the money for her travels also leads to rejection. But it is when facing his father Ciaran must confront what he has done and Michael must face the ultimate dilemma: whether to protect his son from the vigilantes or offer him up for their righteous punishment.



THE TEAM

WRITER / PRODUCER

Conor MacNeill

Invisible Sun is Conor's first screenplay. Under the title Laughter of Our Children it won the 2014 Northern Ireland Screen New Talent Focus which was adjudicated by Northern Ireland Screen, Film4 & BFI. He also has two other projects in early stages of development.

As an actor Conor is currently shooting on the Netflix & Parallel pictures war epic, Jadotville alongside Jamie Dornan, Mark Strong and Guillaume Canet.

Conor's other screen work includes performances in Kari Skogland's 50 Dead Men Walking. Oliver Hirschbeigel's powerful Sundance award winning and BAFTA nominated Drama Five Minutes of Heaven, award winning Irish indie flick Peacefire and Cherrybomb. He played 'Sox' in Academy Award winner Terry George's A Whole Lotta Sole (Stand Off). He also appeared in Maurice Sweeney's Saving the Titanic. Other characters include series regular "PVT. McElvenny" in the BBC One series Privates and "Gerry" in Colin Bateman's SCUP for BBC NI. He also appears in David Leon's feature film Orthodox, the film stars Stephen Graham & Michael Smiley and is due for release in early 2015. He most recently wrapped filming on Whit Stillman's adaptation of Jane Austen's 'Love & Friendship'.

On stage he has notched up a vast array of credits including work with Lyric theatre Belfast, Gate theatre Dublin, Project arts centre Dublin, Corcadorca and Primecut. He made his London stage debut in Brian Friel's Philadelphia, Here I Come! Directed by Lyndsey Turner at the Donmar Warehouse. He also appeared opposite Stephen Rea in David Ireland's two hander

play - Half a Glass of Water. The production marked the return of Field Day Theatre Company and helped Launch the 2013 City of Culture in Derry City.

Most recently Conor performed to much acclaim as 'Bartley McCormick' opposite Daniel Radcliffe in the hugely successful West End revival of Martin McDonagh's The Cripple of Inishmann directed by Michael Grandage. The show was part of the Grandage Season at the Noel Coward Theatre in London. Conor reprised his role in the same production of the show at the Cort Theatre NYC from 13th April 2014 - 20th July 2014. This was his Broadway debut. The show received 6 TONY Award nominations.

Conor has received a nomination at the 2010 Monte Carlo Television Awards for his performance as Ciaran Mclonraic in Irish comedy drama An Crisis, and was nominated for best supporting actor at the 2011 Irish Times Theatre Awards for his harrowing performance in Vassily Sigarev's Plasticine. Conor won Best Actor for his appearance in the short film Cowboys & Dissidents at the 2013 Los Angeles New Wave International Film Festival.

WRITERS NOTE

Invisible Sun is an incredibly personal project for me, which has been inspired by various moments in my life and people I have come across, growing up in working class Belfast. Northern Ireland has seen vast changes since the good Friday agreement of 1998, in particular huge investment and an influx of tourism. Although many parts of the North of Ireland thrive, there are many which suffer from a plethora of socio economic problems and added to these problems is a legacy of a very recent and violent past. For my generation growing up in working class Northern Ireland was a very strange place; we experienced the tail end of the conflict, we are old enough to have seen soldiers on our streets, riots, houses raided, people killed - sometimes relatives, parents and various family members imprisoned and at the same time we were young enough not to fully understand it's reasoning, or the history of what came before. A history which shaped and mapped out the society we were born into, we weren't there for Bloody Sunday or the Hunger Strikes, but yet they had direct impact on who we were and where we were from, and how we identified ourselves. With the Good Friday Agreement came a period of trying to forget "don't speak about the troubles" "lets move on -- we have peace now" and at the same time we were living around people who had seen and done terrible things. People with severe post-traumatic stress, which manifested

itself in many instances in alcoholism, drug addiction, domestic violence and fanatical political and tribal ideologies. Men and women, who were essentially strangers, being released from prisons and moving back into our homes "this is your daddy -- your uncle -- your sister" Like many impoverished areas around the UK and Ireland, suicide is a huge problem amongst the young in working class areas across Northern Ireland. Places like North and West Belfast, which were staggeringly affected by the 30 years of conflict, hold an incredibly high suicide rate. In a recent study, it is stated that from 1998 the number of suicides in Northern Ireland almost matched the number of deaths during the 30 years of the conflict, the highest percentage of suicides were in Belfast:

- It has been estimated that around 3,600 people were killed in Northern Ireland's bloody conflict between 1969 and 1997. Northern Ireland Statistic and Research Agency (NISRA) figures show that a total of 3,288 suicides were registered in Northern Ireland from the beginning of 1998 to the end of 2012 - 77% were men.

There is a high expectation on my generation, the generation that came after 30 years of violence, the generation of the peace process, the generation who will decide what kind of a place Northern Ireland will

become. Yet we have no real voice in the stagnant political landscape, which is dominated by the tit for tat tribal politics of the older generation.

Artistically no film has ever depicted my generation, their story has never been told. Recently we had 71, Fifty Dead Men Walking and Good Vibrations, which have all delved into our history. Five Minutes of Heaven, which dealt with the psychological impact of people who grew up during the darkest days of the conflict, but what about the now? The generation who came after, who are growing up in the fall out, dealing with a precarious rehabilitation of a messy, murky past. With the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising approaching, the world as a whole will be reflecting on Ireland and the long term impacts that the revolution has had on the past 100 years in Irish history. I believe that 2016 is the perfect timing for a film like Invisible Sun, a film that shines a light on the generation of today. It is a story that needs to be told and I will endeavour that it is. Its impact could be poignant, staggering and I would hope it could become an important film in our cultural history.

THE TEAM

DIRECTOR

David Blair

Under the auspices of National Theatre Director Bill Bryden, David's breakthrough came when, while at the BBC, he commissioned Donna Franceschild to write the six part serial *Takin' Over The Asylum*. Starring Ken Stott, and with a leading-part debut for David Tennant, he then went on to direct the show to huge public and critical acclaim, culminating in the 1995 BAFTA Awards for Best Drama Serial and Editing.

David subsequently collaborated on another three projects with Franceschild including *Donovan Quick*, starring Colin Firth, which garnered a number of awards and nominations, including best actress for Katy Murphy at the RTS Awards and Best Single Film at the BAFTAs. The film also played several international film festivals, including Chicago and Cairo.

During that period, David also helmed several other high profile dramas including *Split Second* with Clive Owen and, in Poland, the esteemed adaptation of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, starring Helen McCrory, Kevin McKidd and Stephen Dillane, harvesting five BAFTA and RTS nominations. There followed a movie, *Tabloid*, starring Matthew Rhys, John Hurt, David Soul and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio.

David has enjoyed a long and fruitful association with Jimmy McGovern. Beginning with *The Lakes* in 1997 and continuing through *The Street* and *Accused* – over twenty hours of drama – work that has received worldwide recognition and been showered with awards and nominations – including RTS, Baftas and

International Emmys. They also called on some of Britain's finest acting talent, many of whom received Best Actor Awards for their efforts, including Jim Broadbent, Bob Hoskins, Chris Eccleston and Olivia Coleman.

"Death, drama, and ultimately poetry – *The Street* was something close to perfection" - *The Guardian*

"David Blair's direction caught McGovern's words perfectly. It was a reminder that television isn't just a medium; it can, once in a while, be an art" - *The Independent*.

David's last collaboration with McGovern, a 90 minute single film for the BBC – *Common*, starring Nico Milallegro, Susan Lynch, Danny Mays and Sir Michael Gambon – about the dubious machinations of 'Joint Enterprise', transmitted during 2014 to glowing reviews and subsequent deliberation in both the House Of Commons and Lords. It has already won the RTS North Best Drama Award and Best Single Drama at the Broadcast Awards and received 2015 RTS and BAFTA nominations for Best Single Drama.

David has also directed a BBC version of the classic Thomas Hardy novel, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* with Gemma Arterton and Eddy Redmayne and another feature, *Best Laid Plans*, starring Stephen Graham, David O'Hara, Maxine Peake and Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje.

He also contributed an episode to the Sky Playhouse season: *Snodgrass*, with Ian Hart reprising his role as John Lennon.

The concept is neither overthought nor over-explained, the attention to detail in David Quantick's screenplay is stunning, and Ex-Boo Radley Martin Carr's soundtrack of affectionate pastiches completes this miniature masterpiece of disappointment and regret. – *Time Out*

David, earlier in 2015, completed the feature, *The Messenger*, starring Robert Sheehan, Lily Cole, Tamzin Merchant, Joely Richardson and David O'Hara – which has been selected to play at the 2015 Edinburgh Film festival – and is currently in post-production with another, *Away*, starring Timothy Spall, Juno Temple, Matt Ryan and Susan Lynch.

Next up for David is another Jimmy McGovern film for the BBC about Reg Keys and his quest for justice for a son lost in Iraq. Beyond that, several other projects in development include a feature version of *Snodgrass* (see above), a tragi-comedy set in rural England in 1997 and *The Moon in 2037*,

DIRECTOR'S VISION

This is a story that deals with the complexity of a fragile peace; the confusion, the resentment of men released as a condition of the Good Friday Agreement but without any psychological, educational or financial support. Men who fought a war but ended up in a place fit for zeroes.... And their progeny – the 'children of the peace process' – confused and resentful. A lack of purpose or any defining view on a way forward transmitting itself into alcohol and drug abuse and, in innumerable cases, suicide.

While there's a gritty edge to the story, we won't subject the audience to political rhetoric or seek a pseudo-documentary shooting style. Yes, we aim to tell it 'as it is'. We want it to feel real. Today. But without the need for visual trickery or distraction. Belfast has the potential to provide a canvas that is both exhilarating and aesthetically rewarding. A rugged beauty - something that strikes at the very heart of the film.

The quality of the screenplay will entice many high profile Irish and non-Irish actors to the project and, as Director, I already have in mind a few of those I'm certain will seize the opportunity to be involved. This is an ensemble piece that serves only to magnify the need to ensure every part of the jigsaw fits perfectly. The richly drawn characters extend to the performers the chance to deliver – with texture and depth – something hugely poignant and memorable.

This is a delicate story full of touching and, at times, graceful nuance. A sensitive, forthright interpretation will deliver a film to enlighten, enrich and engross but, at its kernel, stay true to the emotional and cultural well-being of the people involved. For this, above all, is a story about people. Humanity. About hope and aspiration against the odds. About how, in raging waters, we may find pools of tranquility where love and

passion seek to flourish. About comradeship fraying at the edges. About relationships twisted by years of deprivation.... While an unsuspecting world looks on applauding the huge investment and economic growth that benefits the few and forswears the many. Thus, unwittingly, creating a new divide.

I feel our story of abandonment will resonate with youth culture as well as a wider audience unaware of this unsettled generation on our doorstep. These issues also have parallels around the world; recent post-conflicts and post-reconciliation in Germany, Spain, South Africa, and Eastern European states with whom the drama of this story would identify.



THE TEAM

PRODUCER

Michael Knowles

Invisible Sun will mark BAFTA nominated Producer Michael Knowles' seventh film in six years and his third with director David Blair. The drama Away starring Timothy Spall and Juno Temple is set for international release early 2016 and the mystery/horror The Messenger starring Robert Sheehan, Lily Cole and Joely Richardson will be released through Metrodome in the UK autumn 2015.

Michael's prior producing projects include Birthday, starring Stephen Mangan, written by playwright Joe Penhall (The Road) that aired on Sky Arts in 2015 to great reviews; Best Laid Plans starring Stephen Graham and Maxine Peake was released through Sony Pictures in 2012 and 2009's A Boy Called Dad starring Ian Hart was selected for the Edinburgh Film Festival and sold to the BBC.

Michael's pet project Snodgrass starring Ian Hart imagines a 50 year-old John Lennon living on the dole having left the Beatles in 1963. Aired as part of Sky's 2013 Playhouse series, the project was hailed by London's Time Out as a 'mini masterpiece.' Michael is developing a feature length version for the future.

Also in the pipeline is the comedy tHe dYsFUUnCKshOnaZ about a seventies Punk band forced to re-unite when their one hit wonder is used as part of a worldwide credit card promotion and Running Naked a bitter sweet comedy about living with Cancer.

Michael's film influences are many and varied. He is proud to acknowledge his early mentorship from Andrew Eaton through the UK's Guiding Lights scheme and is grateful to have had the opportunity to work with actor Pete Postlethwaite on one of his last films, a short Michael produced called Waving at Trains.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Julie Harkin

Julie Harkin is a Casting Director specialising in film and television. She has become renowned for the discovery and promotion of emerging acting talent, receiving critical acclaim for casting the BAFTA award winning dramas Misfits and The Fades and the recent ground breaking new series, Utopia.

Julie has cast major productions for the BBC, ITV and C4/E4 alongside her film work for companies including Exclusive Media, Cloud Eight Films and 42.

ATTACHED CAST



MICHAEL YOUNG

Stephen Graham

Recently Stephen starred in Martin Scorsese's multi award winning series Boardwalk Empire as Al Capone for HBO. He has previously been acclaimed for his performances in some of the best in UK and International cinema from the BAFTA winning This Is England, Pirates of the Caribbean to Martin Scorsese's Gangs of New York and Public Enemies.

He also starred alongside Nicholas Cage in Season of the Witch and Keira Knightley and Colin Farrell in London Boulevard and played Billy Bremner in The Damned United. He has previously worked with David Blair on Best Laid Plans. He recently starred alongside Jim Broadbent in the Scott Free feature Get Santa , in cinemas Christmas 2014.



CIARAN YOUNG

Conor MacNeill

See Bio Above



YAZZER

Robert Sheehan

Robert has already gathered a whole host of film credits including A Dublin Story, Ghostwood, An Creatur, Summer of the Flying Saucers, Season of the Witch and Killing Bono directed by Nick Hamm. Recently he starred in Begin the Beguine directed by Ari Gold and Mortal Instruments: City of Bones directed by Harald Zwart. Over the summer Robert starred in The Messenger, directed by David Blair.

Robert also has a wealth of high end TV credits, starring as Nathan in Misfits, which he was nominated for a BAFTA. He went on to appear in the leading role of Darren in Love Hate, for which he was nominated for a Best Actor (TV) IFTA. He has worked with David Blair previously on Jimmy McGovern's The Accused.



MARIE YOUNG

Michelle Fairley

Michelle Fairley was born in Coleraine, Northern Ireland. She is an actress, known for Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1 (2010), The Others (2001) and Game of Thrones (2011).

SUGGESTED TALENT FOR OTHER KEY ROLES



LORCAN MURPHY

Ian Hart

Ian Hart, born in England, began acting while a student in Liverpool, England, United Kingdom. He stumbled into acting almost accidentally, but was cast in the play "The Government Inspector". He continued to work in British theater and television, and first gained recognition for portraying John Lennon in the British film Backbeat (1994). He made many films in his native Britain, occasionally appearing in American films and TV series as well.

He has now played John Lennon three times, most recently in the television play Snodgrass, where he played a 50 year old Lennon who had left The Beatles before they became successful.



PEARSE

David O'Hara

David O'Hara has appeared in many films and TV series, including a featured role in the U.S. series The District, which he left after one season to return to Scotland. His memorable role as the 'mad' Irishman Stephen in Braveheart saw him become William Wallace's (Mel Gibson) trusted friend and guardian after proclaiming of Ireland, "It's my island".

O'Hara appeared as Fitzy, one of Jack Nicholson's chief mobsters in the Oscar winning film The Departed. O'Hara filmed The Tudors in Dublin and played Albert Runcorn and Harry Potter disguised as Runcorn in Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 1. He recently worked with David Blair and Michael Knowles in Best Laid Plans.



CLAIRE MCCANN

Sarah Greene

Sarah graduated from the Gaiety School of Acting in 2006. She has just been awarded the 2015 IFTA and Irish Film Board 'Rising Star Award' as well as winning the Best Supporting Actress IFTA for 2015 for her role in the feature film NOBLE – one of very few people to ever win two IFTA's in one night.

Sarah is currently appearing in the recurring role of Hecate in "PENNY DREADFUL" created and written by John Logan for Showtime/Sky Atlantic opposite Helen McCrory, Eva Green, Timothy Dalton and Josh Hartnett.

Sarah recently finished shooting on "BURNT" opposite Bradley Cooper and appears as Laura in the TV mini series "THE ASSETS" (ABC).

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