



Puck of the Irish

(Puc na nGael)

World Premiere

Director Eamonn O'Cualain in attendance

**Opening Night Gala of the 7th Annual
Toronto Irish Film Festival**

**Friday, March 3 – Sunday, March 5, 2017
TIFF Bell Lightbox**

Tickets On Sale Monday, February 13, 2017

Toronto, Monday February 13, 2017: Ireland's major influence on Canada's hockey obsession, the Irish love of home-grown comedy and the story of how an immigrant Irish bomb disposal officer provided sanctuary for Northern Irish children traumatized by The Troubles, will all be showcased at the 7th Toronto Irish Film Festival. Taking place from Friday, March 3 to Sunday, March 5 at TIFF Bell Lightbox, TIRFF 2017 delivers a weekend of Irish cinematic gold with World, North American and Canadian Premieres, short film and animation showcases and very special guests from Ireland.

"In this sesquicentennial celebratory year for Canada, we are delighted to launch our 7th annual festival with the little-known story of how early Irish immigrants transformed Ireland's own national sport of hurling into the beloved game of hockey", says John Galway, Executive Director of TIRFF. "We invite everyone to expand their Canada 150 celebrations, and anyone who loves the games of hockey and hurling, to join us on Opening Night. This year's festival will also continue to deliver exciting features, documentaries and our Annual Animation and Short Film Showcases, shining a light on the latest and greatest filmmaking talent emerging from Ireland."

The Opening Night Gala on Friday, March 3, **sponsored by Tourism Ireland**, features the World Premiere of **PUCK OF THE IRISH/POC NA nGAEL** by director Eamonn O'Cualain. From the early amateur era to the birth of the professional game and the creation of the National Hockey League in 1917, Irish Canadians were at the heart of hockey, especially teams from Toronto, Montreal and

Ottawa. Irish teams were common and many of the early greats were back-boned by players of Irish descent, including The Toronto St. Patrick's, founded in 1919, who would become the Toronto Maple Leafs, one of the most famous hockey teams in the world.

OPENING NIGHT GALA – PUCK OF THE IRISH/POC NA nGAEL (World Premiere)

Friday, March 3, 2017, 7:00pm

Sponsored by Tourism Ireland

Director Eamonn O'Cualain in attendance / Q+A following screening

Running time: 75 mins

We Irish love our sports. We love to play sports and we love to talk sports and it seems that this love of sport stayed with us even when millions of us crossed the Atlantic. Towards the end of the 19th century, the game of ice hockey in Canada became formalized in rules and in structure. Hockey quickly became the most important game in Canadian society. Hockey was the great leveler in Canada enjoyed by people of all classes. Hockey became the glue that gelled Canada together. At the forefront of hockey were men of Irish descent. These men became heroic legends across Canada

THE FLAG (Canadian Premiere)

SATURDAY, March 4, 2017, 4:00pm

Director: Declan Recks

Running time: 84 mins

After returning to Ireland to bury his father, Harry Hambridge discovers that his late grandfather was one of the men who raised the tri-colour over the GPO during the 1916 Rising. Harry and a motley crew of pals then set out to retrieve the flag, which is now a war-trophy, hanging upside down in a British army barracks in London. A heist is conceived and naturally the whole enterprise turns into a caper of epic comic proportions as they attempt to get the flag back to Ireland in time for 1916 commemorations.

TIRFF 2017 IRISH SHORT FILM SHOWCASE

SATURDAY, March 4, 2017, 7:00pm

Running time: 90 mins

An established TIRFF tradition, the Irish Short Film Showcase highlights the work of Ireland's next wave of influential directors. Mixing comedy, drama, documentary and experimental short films, this year's program showcases the depth of Irish filmmaking talent with eight brilliant short films.

Reel Time - 2 mins., director Ken Womack (Canadian Premiere)

Five Stone of Lead - 6 mins., director Jonny Madderson (Canadian Premiere)

Forever Roars The Vast Atlantic - 4 mins., director James Alexander (Canadian Premiere)

The Nation Holds It's Breath - 20 mins., director Kevin Cahill (World Premiere)

Here Lies Mrs. Higgins - 16 mins., director Daniel Holmwood (Canadian Premiere)

Digs For Pennies - 16 mins., director Evin O'Neill (Canadian Premiere)

A Long Shot - 15 mins., director Andrew Jordan (Canadian Premiere)

Pebbles - 15 mins., director Jonathan Shaw (Canadian Premiere)

THE YOUNG OFFENDERS (Toronto Encore)

Saturday, March 4, 2017, 9:15pm

Director: Peter Foott

Running time: 83 mins

Inspired by the true story of Ireland's biggest cocaine seizure in 2007, **The Young Offenders** is a comedy road movie about best friends Conor and Jock, two inner-city teenagers from Cork who dress the same, act the same, and even have the same bum-fluff mustaches. Jock is a legendary bike thief who plays a daily game of cat-and-mouse with the bike-theft-obsessed Garda Sergeant Healy. When a drug-trafficking boat capsizes off the coast of West Cork and 61 bales of cocaine, each worth 7 million euro, are seized, word gets out that there is a bale missing.

IRISH ANIMATION SHOWCASE (Canadian Premieres)

Sunday, March 5, 2017, 3:00pm

Co-presented by Animation Dingle & Toronto Animation Arts Festival International

Running time: 108mins

In 2016, TIRFF was proud to launch a new program that features the best of Irish animation. Curated by Animation Dingle, the showcase features 18 animated shorts from world-acclaimed Irish animation studios such as Cartoon Salon and Brown Bag Films, as well as exciting new filmmakers. Sure to be a hit with animation fans young and old!

HANDSOME DEVIL (Toronto Encore)

Sunday, March 5, 2017, 5:30pm

Director: John Butler

Running time: 95mins

A music-mad 16-year-old outcast at a rugby-mad boarding school forms an unlikely friendship with his dashing new roommate, in this funny and observant coming-of-age tale from Irish novelist and filmmaker John Butler. This tender look at the travails of teenage life is the story of the worst thing Ned ever did. It's also the story of the best thing that ever happened to Ned.

HOW TO DEFUSE A BOMB: THE PROJECT CHILDREN STORY (Canadian Premiere)

Sunday, March 7, 2017, 8:00pm

Sponsored by: N.I Bureau & Tourism Ireland

Director: Des Henderson

Running time: 88 mins

Narrated by Liam Neeson, this inspiring documentary tells the extraordinary untold story of how an NYPD bomb-disposal expert played an important role in helping defuse the decades-old Troubles in Northern Ireland by bringing vulnerable children to America for a summer of peace. Featuring an exclusive contribution from Bill Clinton.

ABOUT THE TORONTO IRISH FILM FESTIVAL

Awarded Partner Festival status with Toronto International Film Festival in 2016, The Toronto Irish Film Festival (TIRFF) was founded in April 2009 by Michael Barry and John Galway who have over 45 years collective experience in the Canadian film and television industry.

Now in its 7th year, the Toronto Irish Film Festival celebrates the very best of Irish cinema and promotes the work of Irish filmmakers to the Greater Toronto Irish community and the Toronto film festival public. With sold-out screenings from 2010 to 2016, TIRFF has assumed the role of leading promoter of Irish film within Canada.

Reaching an audience of 250,000 Torontonians of Irish descent, as well as millions of Toronto-based movie lovers, TIRFF kicks off St. Patrick's Day celebrations and provides a unique cultural destination for Toronto and Ontario based ex-patriots, from the very old and the very new, to connect with the culture of home through the magic of cinema.

OUR SPONSORS and PARTNERS

A very special thank you to all the incredible sponsors and partners who have ensured TIRFF's presence as an annual event, since 2010. We salute and appreciate you.



FOR MORE INFO AND UPDATES, PLEASE CHECK:

TIRFF Website: www.toirishfilmfest.com

Twitter: @toirishfilmfest

Facebook: facebook.com/toirishfilmfest

TICKETING

\$20 Opening Night Gala

\$20 Closing Gala

\$15 All Other Screenings

BOX OFFICE INFO

Tickets on sale February 13 - visit <http://www.toirishfilmfest.com> or call the TIFF Bell Lightbox box office at 416-599-TIFF

MEDIA CONTACT:

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