



Event Report 2025

03, 04, 05 APRIL 2025
BELLTABLE LIMERICK
THE SAVOY HOTEL LIMERICK
ENGINE LIMERICK

Catalyst Trailer
2025



A Message from Catalyst Director Dr. Susan Liddy



Dr Susan Liddy with actor, screenwriter and director Jimmy Smallhorne.

We've just come through our sixth year, which is quite an achievement when you consider we had to abandon our first in-person festival in 2020 and move online with just a couple of weeks' notice because of Covid!

Catalyst is all about excellence in filmmaking while simultaneously prioritising equality, diversity, and inclusion. We've had tremendous support nationally but a special mention here to the city that is home to the festival. We're grateful to Film in Limerick, the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB), Limerick City and County Council, TUS Digital Arts and Media, MIC EDII office and the Belltable for backing us.

There are many, many highlights in 2025, but I'll spotlight just one here. We introduced the inaugural Catalyst Short Documentary Bursary in 2024 for those who wanted to make a short documentary with a theme and team that reflected the festival remit. The worthy winner of that bursary was Nicola Leddy and her film Boobs. We were delighted to welcome her and her family and friends to the Belltable for a reception in advance of the premiere.

It has been a fantastic three days, but we won't be resting on our laurels! We aim to build a bigger festival with an even more engaged audience in 2026. And that process has already begun!

**BOOBS TRAILER
BURSARY 2024
WINNER**

2025
PROGRAMME



Still from *Turnaround*, 2025, Director: Aisling Byrne



Attendee Feedback

**What did you enjoy the
most about the festival?**

Taking part in a film festival and connecting with an audience we couldn't reach just by posting online (on YouTube or Vimeo) is something really special.

Attending the panel discussions gave us strength and valuable insights for our future projects – it was truly brilliant.

This festival is so special to me, and I'm so excited to be part of it this year

Sincere thanks to the jury and festival team for the honour and congratulations to all the winners and finalists whose exceptional work was screened at the festival.

Limerick has a wonderful film festival focused on inclusion and diversity.

It seems incredible to me that someone would go to such lengths to get this screenwriting lab funded – to get a bunch of people together for a couple of days, to tug out their ideas, in the hope that those same ideas may make it onto the screen one day – and that I was one of them!



Miriam Devitt, Lena Byrne and Jennifer Davidson at Catalyst 2025

More Info on
Screenwriting
Industry
Day moderated by
Ursula Rani Sarma
2025



Dr Susan Liddy, Sinead Collopy, Maria O'Neill, Jimmy Smallhorne and Jade Jordan at Catalyst 2025



Ursula Rani Sarma and Paul Fraser at Catalyst 2025



Screenwriting lab and Catalyst Team in the Belltable at Catalyst 2025

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Catalyst 2025 witnessed a significant surge in audience figures and engagement with over 700 attending Workshops, Panels, Screenings and Masterclasses and over 130+ attending our Shaping the Future in Screenwriting Day. This remarkable growth can be attributed to a series of strategic enhancements in programming, industry-focused events, and community outreach initiatives.



Screenwriting Industry Day Main Event: Panels, Q+As, Networking Reception

One of the standout additions to the festival was the Screenwriting Industry Day. This event brought together renowned screenwriters, producers, and industry experts for a day of insightful panels, discussions, and networking opportunities. The Screenwriting Industry Day was particularly successful in attracting professionals and aspiring screenwriters, significantly boosting industry engagement and attendance.



Paul Fraser Masterclass for Shaping the Future in Screenwriting 2025 Event

In this exclusive masterclass, Paul delved into his creative process, shared insights from his extensive experience in the film industry, and discussed the art of crafting narratives that resonate with audiences. Aspiring screenwriters, directors, producers, a range of industry practitioners, students and film enthusiasts were offered a unique opportunity to learn from one of the industry's most respected professionals.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

**FREE
EVENT**

**Screenwriting,
Representation, and Class
Panel**



**FREE
EVENT**

**Building a Career in
Screenwriting Panel**



**FREE
EVENT**

**Caring, Parenting and the
Screen Industries**



**FREE
EVENT**

**Crew Up! Building
inclusivity in Irish Based
Crew**



**FREE
EVENT**

**Documentary Filmmaking: New Voices,
New Opportunities**



**Outreach Programme
Irish Feature with
Ukrainian Subtitles:
Housewife of the Year
Screening**

NEXTGEN PERSPECTIVES

SCHOOLS TY FILMMAKING WORKSHOP & AWARD



**LEARN TO CREATE A SHORT FILM THAT PROMOTES
POSITIVE CHANGE, DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND
INCLUSIVITY - WE WANT TO SEE YOUR STORIES!**

IN ASSOCIATION WITH BURNING HOUSE PRODUCTIONS

www.catalystinternationalfilmfestival.com

www.burninghouse.ie

2025 NextGen Perspectives Programme Schools

Ardscoil Mhuire

Comeragh College

Crescent College Comprehensive

Desmond College

Newport College

Presentation Secondary School Castleisland

Rice College

St. Joseph's Secondary Ballybunion



NEXTGEN PERSPECTIVES 2025

As part of Catalyst International Film Festival's commitment to fostering creativity, diversity, and inclusion, we proudly presented **NEXTGEN PERSPECTIVES: Schools TY Short Film Workshop Programme and Award 2025**, in association with **Burning House Productions**.

In February and March 2025, following a thorough application process, we scheduled and facilitated FREE filmmaking workshops at the 8 selected schools, with up to 28 students per workshop. Our workshops ran for six hours each, engaged students and facilitated them in creating a short film that thematically promotes and celebrates EDI. The participants created a short screen story and learned to use industry-standard equipment to bring their stories to life. All film equipment and material were supplied by Burning House Productions.

During the workshops, students covered the following modules:

- Visual Storytelling
- Cinematography
- Breaking Down A Scene
- Directing
- Lighting
- Script Development
- Working With Actors
- Smartphone Filmmaking
- Screen Acting
- Creating A Character





By the end of each workshop, students had produced, filmed, and acted in their own short film using professional filmmaking equipment. The films were between four and five minutes in length. After the workshops, the films were edited by Burning House Productions and sent to Catalyst, ready for screening on 03rd April in The Belltable!

Discover Your Unique Voice: Students showcased their storytelling abilities and creativity when writing their stories. Each film was unique, which is a sign of great individualism from everyone who participated.

Embrace Diversity in Your Storytelling: Participants learned how to represent diversity, allowing for different voices from underrepresented communities to shine in their films. Each school strived to bring a lesser-represented storyline into the spotlight.

Understand the Power of Inclusion: Participants were inspired to create fun and entertaining films that also called out issues that people face every day, bringing inclusivity to the big screen.

Screen Your Film at Catalyst Festival: The short films produced in the workshop by the students with the help of “Burning House Productions” were screened at the Festival on Thursday, 3rd April, on the big screen in The Belltable.

By participating, students were also eligible for the NEXTGEN PERSPECTIVES Award for the winner and runner-up. **The 2025 NextGen Perspectives Award Winner was Comeragh College, with St. Joseph's Ballybunion winning the Runner-Up Award!**

There was a special Masterclass in the Art of Shooting a Scene with Award-Winning Director Nell Hensey, Videographer & Editor Orlaith Martin, and Actor Siofra Ní Eilí in the morning, where attendees engaged with the industry professionals. In the afternoon, there was a special "Meet The Industry Panel" attended by the workshop facilitators and joined by Rachael Power (Film in Limerick/ National Talent Academy) and moderated by Catalyst's Schools Liaison Officer, teacher Shane McDonagh.



CATALYST 2025 – SCREENWRITING LAB

Lab Participants



Amy-Joyce Hastings



Siobhan Donnellan



Helen Adams



Caroline Harvey



Mo O'Connell



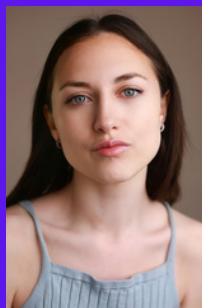
David Power



Bernadette Rowe



Aisha Bolaji



Aine Ryan



Michael Peers

Visiting Producers



Fiona Kinsella



Leeona Duff

Script Editors



Sam Atwell



Lena Byrne

Workshop Facilitator



Jennifer Davidson

CATALYST SCREENWRITING LAB 2025

Catalyst International Film Festival 2025 marked the launch of the inaugural Screenwriting Lab, scheduled from April 4th to 6th, 2025. This initiative underscores our commitment to nurturing diverse storytelling and supporting emerging screenwriters through intensive mentorship, fostering the development of their screenplays through collaborative workshops and professional guidance.

The lab features –

Participants:

Helen Adams
Aisha Bolaji
Siobhan Donnellan
Caroline Harvey
Amy Joyce Hastings
Mo O' Connell
Michael Peers
David Power
Bernadette Rowe
Aine Ryan

Script Editors

Lena Byrne
Sam Atwell

Visiting Producers

Fiona Kinsella (Jumper Productions)
Leeona Duff (On the Blue Bridge)

Lab Facilitator

Jennifer Davidson (Chair, Writers Guild Ireland)



Social Media Campaign

All Applications:

Tiktok, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube

2025 Campaign Total Reach
December 2024 - April 2025



492,086
Reach



4,925
Clicks



22,842
Engaged



1,000
Newsletter Recipients

56% Increase of followers on
Instagram
from 2024 to 2025

BOOBS
TRAILER- 36K
VIEWS ON
INSTAGRAM

SUBMISSION
CALLOUT
REEL-54K
VIEWS ON
INSTAGRAM

2025 Award Winners

First Time Filmmaker

Aisha Bolaji - *Why the Sun & Moon Live in the Sky*

Best International Short

Joint Winner: Ashling Ocampo Colvin - *Grandma's House*

Joint Winner: Jishnu Nandan - *Living on the Edge*

Runner up: Joe Warner - *House Hunters*

Best Irish Short

Winner: Aisling Byrne - *Turnaround*

Runner up: Joy Nesbitt - *The Knife*

Best Short Documentary

Winner: Ellie Marron and Seán Horgan - *Knuck & Knuckle*

Runner up: Tim Corrigan and Esther Springett - *Kin*

Best Screenplay

Winner: Róisín O'Donovan - *Womb Raider*

Runner up: Shannon Welby - *FLEETING*

National Student Award in Association with TUS Digital Art and Media

Winner: Ruairi Bradley - *We Beg to Differ*

Runner up: Tess Doolan Burke - *Florence*

Special mention: Leonardo Oliveira - *Sunflower*

Winner of the Inaugural Catalyst Short Documentary Bursary Award for €10,000

David McDonagh with his Bursary film titled *Queen Lizzie*

2025 Judges

SHORT DOCUMENTARY AWARD

Cara Holmes is a film editor and director and has worked on feature and short documentaries on a wide range of subjects, from the surreal world of self-experimentation to a visceral snapshot of choreographer and dancer, Oona Doherty. Cara's editing credits include feature documentaries *'Housewife of the Year'* CPH: DOX 2025 *'Piano Dreams'*, *'Father of the Cyborgs'* TRIBECA 2021 and *'Lost in France'* CPH: DOX 2017. Her directing credits include the award-winning films *'Welcome To A Bright White Limbo'* and *'Notes From Sheepland'*. She has presented her directing work at festivals including Telluride, HotDocs, Sheffield Doc|Fest, Aesthetica, Catalyst Film Festival, IFI Documentary Festival, GAZE, Offline Film Festival, Dublin International Film Festival, and the Edinburgh Film Festival. *'Welcome To A Bright White Limbo'* received a Special Jury mention at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2020 and won an IFTA for Best Short Film. *'Notes From Sheepland'* won Best Irish Feature Documentary at the Dublin International Film Festival in 2023 and the Pull Focus Best Irish Feature Documentary at Docs Ireland 2023. Her upcoming feature documentary *'Lesbian Lines'* will be released in 2025.

Melanie Iredale is a film exhibitor, audience development strategist and cine-activist. In 2021, she became Director of Reclaim The Frame, the charity behind the UK's campaign for gender equity in cinema, known formerly as Birds' Eye View Film Festival. Now in its 20th year, through film campaigns, training programmes and data-based advocacy, the organisation seeks to build a community for filmmakers of all marginalised genders and their work, with a mission to promote equity in all film spaces. Prior to this, Melanie was Deputy Director at Sheffield DocFest 2014-2021, one of the world's leading documentary festivals and marketplaces, and served as Director of Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival 2009-2014, renowned for its award-winning commissions. Melanie is invited to speak regularly on EDI in the sector, has served on more than a dozen juries globally, including the Teddy Awards at Berlinale, and is a BAFTA member.



2025 Judges

NATIONAL STUDENT SHORT AWARD

Fatoumata Gandega is a writer, director and multidisciplinary artist. Her work focuses on themes of identity, displacement, and belonging, centring voices from diasporic, Muslim, and Black communities. Her craft developed in residencies like Fire Station Artists' Studio and Awards like The National Talent Academy First Credit brings impactful stories to life, where unique perspectives are celebrated and embraced. Fatoumata's first documentary '*Where The Heart Is*' is an official selection for the Catalyst International Film Festival 2024. She was published in several magazines as a writer and was the 2023 Young Writer Delegate for the Belfast Book Festival. The European Parliament and other EU organisations have supported her decolonial exhibition, *Beyond Borders*, launched in Brussels and premiered at the WWOOL Film Festival in Paris. Her short drama '*I Belong*' premiered at the Dublin International Film Festival 2025.

Kwaku Fortune is an actor and playwright known for his work across stage and screen. He will play Kwaku in '*The Haircut*', written and directed by Wayne Jordan for The Ark, and recently appeared as Vet in '*Amelia*' at the Dublin Theatre Festival. On screen, he plays Dec in season 2 of '*The Dry*' (Element Pictures) and the Narrator in '*Anniversary*', directed by Jan Komasa. He starred as Josh Ola in '*Hidden Assets*', reprising the role in season two. His recent stage work includes '*You Belong to Me*' (as Gary, directed by Lynne Parker), *Piaf* (Gate Theatre), and '*The Beauty Queen of Leenane*' (Lyric Hammersmith & Chichester Festival Theatre). His TV credits include '*Line of Duty*' (BBC), '*Redemption*' (ITV), and '*Normal People*' (BBC/Hulu). He starred in '*Burn It All and Animals*', opposite Holliday Grainger and Alia Shawkat. Kwaku voices Gael in '*Skydance*' Animation/Apple+'s Luck. His theater credits also include '*Asking for It*' (Birmingham Rep), '*Peat, and Raftery's Hill*' (Abbey Theatre). He has been nominated for the 2024 Screen Ireland - IFTA Rising Star Award.



2025 Judges

NATIONAL STUDENT SHORT AWARD

Ruth Meehan is a writer/director of award-winning & nominated film and television since the early 2000s. Ruth's debut film, *'The Bright Side'* was the recipient of the Audience Award at the 2020 Cork International Film Festival, the Jury Award at The Sonoma International Film Festival 2021 and the Grand Logis, Prix du Public in Rennes in Brittany in 2022. More recently Ruth has directed the Lionsgate-funded TV series *'Northern Lights'* for Deadpan Pictures in Dublin. Ruth is currently in development with three features and a number of TV series for both Irish and International producers. She also mentors at Bow Street Acting Academy, The Lir Academy, IADT, and Queens University Belfast, along with Stowe Story Lab. Ruth is an active board member of The Screen Director's Guild of Ireland, and a member of the Writer's Guild of Ireland and Women in Film and TV.

BEST IRISH SHORT AWARD

Brendan Byrne is an internationally recognised filmmaker who has made 15 feature length films in the last 10 years in both the fiction and nonfiction genres. Selected credits include *'That They May Face The Rising Sun'*, *'In The Shadow Of Beirut'*, *'Gaza'*, *'Bobby Sands: 66 Days'*, *'Mercury 13'*, *'One Million American Dreams'*, *'Hear My Voice'*, *'An Engineer Imagines'*, *'Maze And Jump'*

Neasa Hardiman is an IFTA- and twice-BAFTA winning Director, Writer and Executive Producer who has created large-scale globally successful prestige dramas with Netflix, Amazon, Disney, and Hulu; as well as making high-end drama with public service media including the BBC and Channel 4. Her feature film *'Sea Fever'* screened in competition on the opening night of TIFF 2019, the film won numerous plaudits as well as worldwide distribution. In addition to her professional practice, Neasa serves on the Boards of RTÉ, Trinity College Dublin, the Irish Film Institute and the Dublin International Film Festival.

2025 Judges

INTERNATIONAL SHORT AWARD

Marissa Aroy is an Emmy award-winning director renowned for her impactful documentaries, including the celebrated PBS program *'Sikhs in America.'* Her work also earned her an Emmy nomination for *'The Delano Manongs,'* highlighting the pivotal yet overlooked contributions of Filipinos in the U.S. labor movement. A Fulbright Scholar, Aroy was awarded the inaugural Hatsuye Yamasaki Award for Visionary Leadership by the College of William and Mary. Her career also encompasses educational roles, having taught at Trinity College Dublin, Berkeley City College in California and The New School in New York. Recently transitioning into TV drama, Aroy continues to push boundaries in storytelling. She resides in Wicklow Town, Ireland, with her husband and creative collaborator Niall McKay.

Rouzie Hassanova is an award-winning writer and director whose Muslim identity gives her an authentic and fresh vision to her work. She is known for her commitment to collaboration, powerful themes and true-to-life performances. Her debut feature film, *'Radiogram'*, won several awards, including the Audience Award at the Sofia International Film Festival, the Best Debut Award at the Golden Rose Film Festival, and the Special Mention Award at the Vukovar International Film Festival. *'Radiogram'* was screened at international festivals in Haifa, Dubai, Heartlands, Istanbul, and Transylvania, and is available on Amazon Prime and SBS Australia. Her collection of award-winning shorts *'Song for Serbia'*, *'Tree Without a Root'*, *'Vicky'*, and *'The Portrait'*, travelled to various festivals including Show Me Shorts, Raindance, In the Palace, Galway, Big Sur, Sofia, and Wairoa Māori Film Festival. Rouzie is also a creative leader with extensive experience in international film financing, development, production and post-production. While in London, she worked for the renowned post-production company Prime Focus, and the international sales agents HanWay Films and Mister Smith Entertainment. Since moving to New Zealand with her Kiwi husband, she has worked in Development at Great Southern TV, the New Zealand Film Commission, and Libertine Pictures.



2025 Judges

SHORT SCREENPLAY AWARD

Kirsten Sheridan is an Oscar and Golden Globe-nominated writer, a studio feature director, and an independent producer. She co-founded The Factory, Ireland's premier filmmaking collective, and currently works in film and television in Los Angeles.

Richie Conroy is an award-winning comedy and drama writer. Richie co-created and co-wrote the Irish-language crime drama series 'Crá' (TG4/Fibin), now streaming on BBC iPlayer, and wrote the upcoming feature mockumentary 'Fran The Man' (Forty Foot Pictures/Screen Ireland/RTÉ) starring Ardal O'Hanlon, adapted from Richie's own series 'Fran: Assistant Manager', which he also directed. Other recent credits include the 'Two by Two' feature films and 'Malory Towers', a lavish BBC adaptation of the much-loved Enid Blyton books.



2025 Judges

DOCUMENTARY BURSARY AWARD

Ciaran Cassidy is an award-winning filmmaker and founder of Little Wing Films, specializing in factual storytelling across cinema, TV, and audio. His films have premiered at major festivals like Sundance, Telluride, IDFA, and SXSW, earning over 40 international awards. In 2024, his documentary *'Housewife of the Year'* premiered at CPH:DOX, won Best Irish Documentary at Galway Film Fleadh, and the Jury Award for Best Documentary at Newport Beach Film Festival. That year, he also produced *'Stakeknife'*, a BBC Sounds podcast about an IRA enforcer-turned-double agent, praised by The Observer as “riveting” and “exceptional.” His debut feature *'Jihad Jane'* (2020) received a theatrical release in the UK and Ireland, earning critical acclaim. He also wrote *'The Racer'*, which premiered at SXSW. His short films *'The Moderators'* (2017) and *'The Last Days of Peter Bergman'* (Sundance premiere) won multiple awards, including an IFTA. His debut short Collaboration *'Horizontale'* premiered at Telluride and won at Palm Springs International Film Festival.



2025 Judges

DOCUMENTARY BURSARY AWARD

Vanessa Gildea is an award winning Producer / Director / Writer and lecturer in the Department Film + Media and the National Film School, IADT. Vanessa has received five IFTA nominations including writer / director of *'The White Dress'*, producer in the Feature Documentary category for *'Dambé – The Mali Project'*, *'John Ford– Dreaming the Quiet Man'*, as Producer / Director of *'The 34th – A History of Marriage Equality'* in Ireland and as part of the team that made the IFTA winning *'1916 The Irish Rebellion.'* She is a former Vice-Chair of Women in Film & TV Ireland and served on the board for three years.

Sinead O'Brien is an award-winning producer, director, writer, and non-fiction author with a 25-year career spanning documentary and drama. She has worked with Screen Ireland, BBC, Sky Arts, RTE, and others on various films. She recently produced *'Legends in My Backyard'* and is in production on The *'Double Killing of George Nkencho'* as writer, director, and executive producer. She co-authored *'Left for Dead'* (Sunday Times Sports Book of the Year) and *'Striking Back'* (Irish Independent Political Book of the Year), which is being adapted for the stage by Matt Spangler (The Kite Runner). Since 2023, she has focused on drama, directing *'The Invitation'* (DLR First Frames), being a finalist for RTE Storyland and The Stowe Connemara Lab 2024, and completing an MA in Screenwriting at IADT. She attended MIDPOINT TV Writers Room under Gabor Krigler and Ben Morris and recently shadow-directed Hannah Quinn on *'Sanctuary: A Witches Tale'* (AMC+), mentored by Lisa Mulcahy. Sinead is currently in post-production on her second short film, *'Little Btch*'*, funded by Ardan and RTE.

Gallery 2025



Gallery 2025



Gallery 2025



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Boobs! - Short Documentary

CLIP • 27 MINS • 01 APR • THE RAY D'ARCY SHOW

Boobs! is the winning short documentary of the Catalyst International Film Festival Short Doc Bursary Award 2024. It's the story of a bold and brave project undertaken by artist Geraldine Carton, where she painted 100 nude breast portraits from the female perspective. Noeleen Slevin and Lema Murphy feature in the documentary.



Irish Film and Television Network > TV > news

Catalyst International Film Festival returns for its 6th edition

25 Mar 2025 : News Desk



Catalyst International Film Festival

Post

screen and behind the camera. Its ambassador is Hollywood actress, Ruth Negga.

Speaking about the festival, Dr Susan Liddy, festival founder and director, said: "The festival has gone from strength since our launch in 2020 – it's wonderful to be announcing our 6th programme! We have an action packed few days and I'm particularly proud to present the world premiere of *Boobs*, which was awarded the inaugural Short Documentary Bursary Award last year and will be one of the closing films of the festival. Championing diversity and inclusion behind and in front of the camera, a key part of Catalyst's mission, *Boobs* is a bold and deeply intimate short documentary that reclaims the narrative around representation of women's bodies."

Based in Limerick, **Catalyst** International Film Festival will host the 6th edition of the festival presenting films, panel discussions, workshops and networking events in venues across the city during the 3rd-5th of April.

Catalyst International Film Festival presents a film programme that focuses on stories and storytellers currently under-represented on

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17 Apr 2020

EDITOR'S PICK



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Caitriona Balfe stars in The Amateur



Barry Keoghan to attend Fastnet Film Festival

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PHOTOS 6th Catalyst International Film Festival wraps with resounding success in Limerick



PHOTOS 6th Catalyst International Film Festival wraps with resounding success in Limerick

Published 2 days ago on 07/04/2025
By Richard Lynch

6th Catalyst International Film Festival wraps with resounding success in Limerick. Dr Susan Liddy, Founder & Creative Director (front row second from left) with award winners. Photo: Olena Oleksienko/ilovelimerick

The 6th Catalyst International Film Festival officially wraps after a successful and dynamic three-day run across Limerick from April 3-5



The 6th Catalyst International Film Festival celebrated an incredible three-day run from April 3 to 5, transforming Limerick's venues into a vibrant hub of storytelling, education, and a celebration of diversity in local and international film.

The festival has gone from strength to strength since it was founded by Dr Susan Liddy in 2020 with this year's

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Catalyst International Film Festival takes centre stage in Limerick

The festival presenting films, panel discussions, workshops and networking events across Limerick runs from April 3-5





Fréwaka is among the films that will be screened during the festival in Limerick

By Leader Reporter
03 Apr 2025 9:00 AM
Email: news@limerickleader.ie

CATALYST International Film Festival will host the 6th edition of the festival presenting films, panel discussions, workshops and networking events in venues across Limerick this week, April 3-5.

Festival organisers promise a programme that prioritises stories and storytellers currently under-represented on screen and behind the camera.

Dr Susan Liddy, festival founder and director, said: "The festival has gone from strength since our launch in 2020 – it's wonderful to be announcing our 6th programme! We have an action packed few days and I'm particularly proud to present the world premiere of Boobs, which was awarded the inaugural Short Documentary Bursary Award last year and will be one of the closing films of the festival.

"Championing diversity and inclusion behind and in front of the camera, a key part of Catalyst's mission, Boobs is a bold and deeply intimate short documentary that reclaims the narrative around representation of women's bodies," said Dr Liddy.

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NEWS

MIC Academic aims to amplify diverse voices as Catalyst International Film Festival returns to Limerick

1 APR 2025



A film festival founded by Mary Immaculate College (MiC) academic, Dr Susan Liddy, is set to return to Limerick this week, with an exciting programme dedicated to amplifying underrepresented voices in film.

The Catalyst International Film Festival (CIFF)—which promotes and prioritises films, debates and workshops from sidelined groups—will run from 3 to 5 April at a number of venues in Limerick but primarily in the Belltable Theatre.

Once upon a time in Saipan

In advance of his masterclass in Limerick, screenwriter Paul Fraser tells Esther McCarthy about his work on the film take of the spat between Roy Keane and Mick McCarthy

HE HAS collaborated closely with top British filmmaker Shane Meadows and directed a family drama filmed in Cobh. But Paul Fraser's forthcoming screenplay aims to get to the heart of one of the biggest talking points in Irish sporting history.

Saipan — due to be released later this year — tells the story of the remarkable falling out between Roy Keane and Mick McCarthy on the eve of Ireland's 2002 World Cup campaign. When Irish production company Wild Atlantic Pictures first planned to bring the film — starring Cork actor Eanna Hardwicke as Keane and Steve Coogan as McCarthy — to the screen, they approached Fraser.

As the English screenwriter prepared to pen the screenplay, he delved deep into the events leading up to one of the most memorable falling outs in the history of Irish sport. He was approached to do so by Irish producer Macdara

Kelleher.

"I'd met him a few times over the years. He said: 'I've got this story I want to tell.' In the UK, he was massive, Roy Keane, and anyone who knows football also knows who Mick McCarthy is. So it's a story that's international as well as huge in Ireland. It was just massive, and I think divided the nation.

"Going into the research for what the Irish team were doing, I went back to Jack Charlton times. When he qualified for the USA World Cup [in 1994], England didn't qualify — and so we all collected and followed Ireland."

Fraser, who visited *Saipan*'s sets during filming last year, aimed to piece together the details behind why the player and manager fell out so dramatically, and revisited a remarkable period in Keane's career.

"He felt like he single handedly got the Irish team to the 2002 World Cup. He played every game apart from the end game."

Saipan will no doubt be a talking point when Fraser comes to Limerick on April 4 to conduct a masterclass and explore the craft of screenwriting as part of the city's Catalyst Film Festival. The festival focuses exclusively on films that address under-representation on screen and behind the camera — gender equality, diversity, and inclusion are core to their programming.

"They do a lot on women in television and film. They do a lot based on working class in film and TV. That's my background. That's my world — the stories I like to talk about and write about. So that's something I'll be touching on.

But I like to give people something to do as well, generating stories and how people can find the story from within, touching on a couple of practical exercises."

Fraser's career spans nearly three decades. He's written numerous films for other directors as well as making his own features and shorts. He has

also directed music videos for the likes of Arctic Monkeys and Plan B.

But his collaboration with Shane Meadows is one of the most significant, and one which started as a childhood friendship. As emerging filmmakers, they collaborated on a trilogy of films about life in their hometown — *Twenty Four Seven*, *A Room for Romeo Brass*, and *Once Upon a Time in the Midlands*. Fraser would go on to co-write two of Meadows' best-known films: *Dead Man's Shoes* and *Somers Town*.

The two were childhood friends growing up in Uttrother ("Famous for biscuits and JCBs," he says) and he remembers how they used to make up sketches in a bid to make passers by laugh outside the town pub, spending any earnings in the chip shop.

In their teens, they started to get more technical in their storytelling approach.

"They had a petrol station down the hill from where I was living and they rented out the old VHS cameras, where you put the cassette in and then straight into your VHS player.

"We used to get it on the Friday and it was closed on the Sunday, so you got it free on Sunday. We used to do silly little things with it, like put it on a skateboard, and think we'd done an amazing tracking shot because we'd watched a bit of Scorsese. We just

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played, nothing connected to it as an actual job, or anything like that."

On leaving school, Fraser took a travel and tourism course, which he didn't enjoy.

"I went and helped in the local drama school, doing some lighting for them. One of the teachers, somebody stepping in being amazing for me, said to come and do this performing art course.

"I was laughing at kids being oak trees and then six months later, I was being a tree. As part of that I did a little bit of writing, a little bit of performing, theatre. Shane was doing his film stuff. At one point, he came in and said: 'I've been offered a bit of money are you interested to do some writing?'"

"We were thrust into writing *Twenty Four Seven* because Shane found us the opportunity. We somehow got Bob Hoskins to play the lead character, he says, adding they brought their script to a theatre where Hoskins was performing.

"From then on, it was just the next job and the next job and the next job."

Why is it important to him to tell

the stories of working-class people?

"It's partly to do with growing up, and what we would see and what we would watch. You'd go to the main

street and see people arsing about and having the crack and getting into trouble or whatever, but there was humour associated with it.

"I felt that a lot of the stories from my world, obviously like the soaps in the UK, were always quite down and grumpy and not celebratory, and we wanted to tell stories that reflected our upbringing, which was just having a laugh all the time, and humour. Obviously darker moments in life, but we felt that that was something absent in our type of world and our type of stories."

In 2010, his own directorial career brought him to Cork, where he lived and worked while filming the family drama *My Brothers*. He has fond memories of that time.

"It was brilliant. We stayed in Cork, filmed in Cobh. Will Collins wrote the script, and he'd won the Galway Film Festival pitching competition. For that, he was awarded money to get a script editor. That's how I got involved in the project. It was one of those things in life, where you casually say: 'I'd be interested in directing it'. Andrew Meehan at the Film Board [now Screen Ireland], he jumped on that, and I ended up directing it."

■ Catalyst Film Festival comes to Limerick from April 3-5, with a packed

programme of events, programmes and guests. For further details, see catalystinternationalfilmfestival.com

He felt like he single-handedly got the Irish team to the 2002 World Cup. He played every game apart from the end game



Steve Coogan and Eanna Hardwicke play Mick McCarthy and Roy Keane in 'Saipan', written by Paul Fraser (inset below).

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ries of my nanny for this and my best ones are just sitting there and chatting,' she says. 'I love chatting and telling stories and my nanny was so similar in that she was just a storyteller. So I think my favourite memories are just sitting here with a cup of tea in hand listening to her talking. The older you get, you realise it is the simple things in life that matter, all those little things.'

■ **JADE** will participate in the Catalyst International Film Festival panel *Screenwriting, Representation and Class*, talking about the challenges for working-class actors and writers in breaking into an industry that's predominantly middle-class. The festival runs from April 3-5, see catalystinternationalfilmfestival.com

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Pride: With her mother and nanny holding her book



Close relationship: Jade with her mother Dominique

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decisions she made and to just jump over all those hurdles and bring up her children in Sean McDermott Street at a really difficult time and for them to all turn out well.

Jade wrote her family story at the time of George Floyd's death. She wanted to tell the story of how her mother was treated because of her skin colour and her own experiences too. 'I could never really understand the whole idea of my grandfather just not being accepted and my ma coming over here and being brown and not being accepted,' she says. 'That was why I wanted to dig into this - how could we do better? How could I be a part of not just telling the story but educating people so that they could understand better and be a part of progression or action?'

'To shine a light but not sit in those dark moments.'

Dominique wanted a better world for Jade and her sister too and often worked two jobs to give them everything she could.

'Being a parent is extremely hard but I guess being a single parent is even harder,' says Jade. 'You have to make those decisions on your own and you have to trust they are the right decisions to make.'

'My mam gave us encouragement to do what I wanted but I was always told it might take time, which I think is gorgeous because it was the money side of things as she was doing it as one person. She always worked as a special needs assistant and did waitressing and cleaning on the side, whatever she could.'

'I'm a board member for WFT, the Women in Film and Television organisation, and next week I have been asked to speak on a panel at the Catalyst Festival in Limerick about having more working-class voices in film and television,' she says. 'I guess sometimes you need to see someone else doing it to believe that you can too.'

'Coming from a working-class background you don't always have the luxury of making your own stuff and it's not always easy to get funding. There is always a possibility but getting over the

mark is really hard.'

There are so many betrayals, Jade says, of the working classes on screen and in films in terms of the stereotypes that are repeated.

'It's just not always from the eyes of someone who has lived that experience and that can be frustrating,' she says. 'Working-class stories should not all be doom and gloom or crime - there are happy stories too.'

Growing up, Dominique did her best to protect Jade and her sister from the kind of racism she had experienced herself, moving to Ireland in her teens. 'She always told us from a very young age that life would be a little bit more difficult and hopefully it would have got better from when she was a kid,' says Jade.

'And it has. She taught us not to be walkovers and to stick up for ourselves. She told us there would be racial slurs and there were. I knew my skin colour was totally different than my friends. I wasn't deluded - my hair was down to my bum with curls.'

Dominique watched her daughter pursue the dream of acting she desperately wanted, even though it meant moving to London for several years.

'She was so proud of me,' Jade says. 'I got a bit of film and TV work and then I moved back here in 2018 and my first job at home was in the Abbey Theatre, which was such a big moment. I think every actor wants to stand on that stage at some point.'

'So we had two coachloads of people come from Blanchardstown and they were amazing. They loved the show, it was a great opening night.'

'I remember coming in the next day, and the two directors and voice coach saying, "Oh my god, the pride in that audience last night was unbelievable. When are Blanchardstown coming back in?"'

Dominique is still proud of Jade and loves the buzz on her acting sets. But it was while Jade was filming the RTE drama *Blackshore* that Kathleen suddenly got a cancer diagnosis and died very rapidly.

'Grief is like a rollercoaster and me and my nanny were extremely close so it's been very hard,' says

Jade. 'I was shooting a TV series and she was diagnosed with cancer and gone within seven weeks. It was extremely quick.'

'I know she was 91 and everyone says, "Oh, it's a great age". But when you lose someone, it doesn't matter what age they are, it's still extremely painful.'

Jade would finish filming at night in Killaloe, Co Clare, and travel up to Blanchardstown to be with her nanny.

'I didn't tell anyone what was happening and then she passed away in the middle of shooting,' she recalls. 'I think it was good timing in that it kept me out and kept me busy and then after we wrapped I just crashed.'

Jade felt incredibly ill but believed at first she was just grieving her nanny. She was constantly in pain and fainting but still managed to walk 288km of the Camino in an effort to make herself feel better. For two years tests showed nothing.

'At one point I thought I was going mad because I kept being told there was nothing wrong with me,' she says.

But after hearing a podcast about endometriosis, Jade realised her symptoms were quite similar and she asked to see a specialist who confirmed that was the problem. She was operated on last October.

It's only now that she's coming back to herself and she is thankful that Kathleen and Dominique gave her some of their mettle.

'I think they gave me the strength to get through it,' Jade says. 'I never thought I had the strength my nanny had or that my mam holds, but I do. You have that strength to carry on.'

'I appreciate the things they've done for me and the things they went without for me and I recognise that in both of them.'

Jade, who starred in *The Virtues* with Stephen Graham, has a number of films in the pipeline including *Crazy Love*, which is due out this year. She is soon to work on another in May but is currently writing a children's play for *The Ark* in Dublin about a relationship between a granddaughter and grandmother.

'I have been looking at memo-

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