

• FILM & ENTERTAINMENT •

Irish Movie News From Hollywood And Beyond

by James Bartlett in Los Angeles

IT WAS THE NEWS THAT SET Irish hearts-a-flutter; Hollywood heartthrob George Clooney could be coming to the Emerald Isle this summer, and he'll be traveling around the county on two wheels, negotiating the twisting country roads and freeways alike on his motorbike.

Irish-American actor Clooney seems to have heard the call of the Old Country, and he let slip about his upcoming vacation plans during an interview with a Dublin radio station during interviews at the London premiere of his current screwball comedy movie *Leatherheads*:

"I am doing a motorbike ride in Ireland this summer. I hear it rains a lot but I've got the perfect outfit!"

It's hardly major news that an Irish-American wants to visit his ancestral home, but making the trip by motorbike is a relatively new phenomenon, and General Manager Grace Poutch of Motorcycle Rental Ireland in Naas, County Kildare, was already looking forward to maybe getting a call—or even a visit—from Clooney:

"More and more people are hopping off the plane and then onto the back of a bike, although Ireland has very different roads to the ones they're used to. The odd one will think they can tour Ireland pretty much in a day or three, because it looks so small.

I have to explain to them that it's really not like that."

There are other differences too; road signs will be kph (kilometer per hour) and not the usual mph (miles per hour), and of course you have to drive on the opposite side of the road, although most bikers manage this safely and without any major problems. That wasn't quite the case for Clooney last year though: a car hit him and his girlfriend Sarah Larson while they were riding in New Jersey, and she suffered a broken rib while she hobbled away with two broken toes.

On his hopefully accident-free trip Clooney can take some of the most popular tour runs through Waterford and Cork, and maybe even ride up to the famous Giant's Causeway, although that's apparently more for those with tougher behinds and a more adventurous spirit.

The former "ER" star apparently has roots in County Cork, the rebel county, and if he heads there he can kiss the Blarney stone for luck ("Please let me win another Oscar this year?"), although there are bound to be plenty of willing Irish ladies ready to take the stone's place if the line is too long!

Perhaps with a mind to that idea, Poutch has already tried to contact Clooney's agent to offer their services: "If he's coming over he can have it for free, especially if he takes me out to lunch or better, puts me on the back of it."

Elsewhere in the world of the silver screen, a new Irish movie called *Red Roses and Petrol*—based on the play by Joseph O'Connor—is due to hit screens on Friday, June 13. A dark comedy that explores the



Malcolm McDowell in 'Red Roses and Petrol'

complex dynamics of love, life, and the loss of a family member with black humor and a few surprises along the way, it stars legendary actor Malcolm McDowell (best know for his roles in *A Clockwork Orange* and *If...*).

Director Tamar Simon Hoffs (whose daughter Susanna Hoffs is a member of 80's cult band *The Bangles* and contributed to the movie soundtrack) got a tour-de-force performance from McDowell and the ensemble cast that includes Max Beesley (*Hotel Babylon*), Heather Juergensen (*Kissing Jessica Stein*), Greg Ellis (*Pirates Of The Caribbean*), Susan Lynch (*Waking Ned Devine*) and Olivia Tracey (*Lucky You*).

The story is based around the family of Enda Doyle (McDowell), who have gathered in Dublin for his wake and to celebrate the rascally old man. Amidst the smoke and beers, Enda's legacy is revealed to include a trail of unresolved issues, a dysfunctional family, and a disturbing mystery.

This may sound like almost every Irish wake, and the producers of the movie came up with an unusual and exciting idea to promote the movie—and possibly unearth some of the hottest new talent around.

Fans and aspiring directors were asked to create short videos (no longer than five minutes) expressing how much they appreciate McDowell's extensive body of work (he's been on screen since the late 1960s remember) and then upload and post them on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/group/redrosesandpetrol>

By the time you read this the contest will have ended, and you can view the winning entry online. The lucky winner's prize includes a private, 10-minute telephone chat with McDowell,

an autographed *Red Roses and Petrol* poster and a copy of the official shooting script signed by all the cast members.

Even in the age of YouTube this is an unusual marketing tool for the movie and Paul Hancock, CEO of producers World Wide Motion Pictures notes that McDowell was a large reason why:

"Because we have received so much interest in the film, largely because of Malcolm's involvement, we felt that reaching out to the vast internet audience would not only help get the word out about this wonderful little film, but also provide a rare opportunity for long-time fans of Malcolm McDowell to interact personally with this award-winning actor."

With his shock of white hair and distinctive British accent, McDowell is one of the most recognizable and recognized UK actors working in Tinsel Town. He is just as busy now as he was when he first rose to fame in the late 1960s, and although he will probably always be best known for his performance in Stanley Kubrick's infamous 1971 classic, he more recently has appeared in reoccurring roles on NBC's "Heroes" and HBO's "Entourage", and took on the role of the late Donald Pleasance in the recent remake, *Rob Zombie's Halloween* (2007). Later this year he will be featured in television mini-series "War and Peace" and "Coco Chanel."

Elsewhere in Hollywood, actor Brendan Gleeson (fresh from his successes in *Beowulf* and Irish movie *In Bruges*) will join Matt Damon (*The Bourne Identity*) in a new thriller directed by Paul Greengrass (*Bloody Sunday*, *United 93*). The as-yet-untitled film is currently filming in Spain, and is based on Rajiv Chanrasekaran's book "Imperial Life in the

Emerald City", with the film script penned by Brian Helgeland (*LA Confidential*, *Mystic River*).

The drama focuses on the contradictions and differences between the Green Zone, where troops are housed, and the streets of Baghdad after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Gleeson will play an American soldier, and his supporting cast includes Greg Kinnear (*Little Miss Sunshine*), Amy Ryan (*Gone Baby Gone*) and Jason Isaacs (*Brotherhood*).

Starring alongside Gleeson in the aforementioned *In Bruges* was Colin Farrell, and it was recently announced that he'd join Spanish actress Paz Vega (*Spanglish*) and screen legend Christopher Lee (*The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*) in *Triage*, the latest movie from award winning filmmaker Danis Tanovic (*Best Foreign Film Oscar for 2002's No Man's Land*). Shooting has already started at Ciudad de la Luz studios in Alicante, Spain, and they will also be on the streets on Dublin for three weeks too.

Farrell, who is also an executive producer, stars as Mark, a photojournalist returning home from a dangerous assignment. When his colleague and best friend fails to return home, Mark's girlfriend, Elena (Vega), must find the clues to the mystery that's slowly killing her boyfriend. The movie is adapted from Scott Anderson's novel of the same name, and Irish producer Alan Moloney noted:

"Danis has written a powerful and moving script with a universal appeal. The prospect of himself and Colin Farrell working together alongside the beauty and talent of Paz Vega and an icon of cinema like Christopher Lee is very exciting for us all."

IFTA winning actress Anne Marie Duff has moved up into

the big leagues; she will star alongside Helen Mirren (*The Queen*), Christopher Plummer (*Closing the Ring*), Paul Giamatti (*Sideways*) and James McAvoy (*Atonement*) in director Michael Hoffman's biopic of Leo Tolstoy (writer of novels "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina").

Based on Jay Parini's 1990 novel, "The Last Station" depicts the final year in the life of the Russian writer and philosopher and his troubled relationship with his wife Sofya. Duff plays their daughter Sasha, and the \$20,000,000 drama will shoot in Germany and Russia.

Oscar winning screenwriter William Monahan (*The Departed*) has begun a screen adaptation of Irish novelist Ken Bruen's crime drama "London Boulevard." Born in Galway, Ken Bruen is known for his crime noir novels including "The Guards" and the 2008 Edgar Allen Poe Award nominated "The Dramatist and Priest."

Monahan is planning to make his directorial debut with *London Boulevard*, a story that follows a South London ex-con trying to go straight life by working as a handyman for a reclusive young actress.

Monahan is a busy man; he is also adapting Cormac McCarthy's novel "Blood Meridian," the screenplay for "Jurassic Park IV" and a re-make of Korean film "The Chaser."

Moving across the country to New York, a screenplay written by Irish screenwriter Terry McMahon (Irish television soap "Fair City") and producer Bart Daly has beaten off the challenge from almost 500 admissions and has been chosen to participate in the Tribeca Film Festival's All Access program. The program ran at the recent film festival and is aimed at fostering connections between film industry executives and filmmakers from traditionally underrepresented communities in the USA.

The untitled screenplay, which tells the story of injustice towards American Indians in the 1870s, was one of 37 projects selected from the open call, and Daly was delighted:

"It is a great honor to be chosen to participate in the Tribeca All Access film. This story needs to be told because it addresses a very important time in American history, which is often forgotten about. The inclusion of our script at Tribeca is good timing for us as in January this year we raised half of the film budget and the momentum of Tribeca has already generated industry interest in America." Based on a true story, the script centers on Chief Standing Bear of the Ponca Nation, who is now recognized as one of the first civil rights leaders in America, and follows the events that unfold when a Ponca Indian chief is arrested in an attempt to return to his homeland to bury the bones of his murdered child. The movie has the endorsement of the Ponca Nation, and will be directed by Valerie Red-Horse. Fingers crosses that they get the final funding and we see this story on our screens soon!