

Belfast Film Festival

29th October - 7th November 2026

Opening Film

Lost City

Director Seán Murray, 96 Minutes

Known primarily for his work in documentary, including the award-winning *Unquiet Graves*, this is Murray's first fictional feature film and is an intricate, fast-paced debut. Starring Martin McCann (*Blue Lights*) as Paul, a boxer whose life is getting back on track when he starts dating a woman with a troubled past. When her violent ex-boyfriend, a notorious Limerick gangster, follows her to Belfast, Paul finds himself caught up in a crime underworld in order to protect the woman he loves. A thrilling crime drama with a wider cast including Stephen Rea, John Connors, Geraldine Hughes, Jade Jordan, Graham Earley and Jade O'Neill. The director and cast members will be in attendance at the screening.

Thursday 29 October, 7.00pm, Cineworld, £14/£12

Closing Film

I See Buildings Fall Like Lightning

Director Clio Barnard, 109 Minutes

Written by Enda Walsh and adapted from the novel by Keiron Goddard, it centres five childhood friends in Birmingham, entering their thirties in the midst of the UK housing crisis. Tackling themes of gentrification, class and family, the friendships are tested by the increasing demands and responsibilities of adulthood. The use of actors lip-synching in her first film, *The Arbor*, about playwright Andrea Dunbar, marked Barnard as a bold new visionary in British cinema. Most recently, the tender drama *Ali & Ava*, was another Yorkshire-set story. *I See Buildings Fall Like Lightning* is

Barnard's fifth feature film in a remarkable career and Belfast Film Festival is delighted to present its Irish Premiere.

Saturday 7 November, 7.00pm, Cineworld, £14/£12

Skintown

Director Kieron J Walsh, 99 Minutes

Sacked from their dead-end job and dreaming of the wider world, when an opportunity presents itself in the form of a risky deal with two flute band members, the pair throw themselves into it, setting off an hilarious chain of events. Directed by Kieron J Walsh and adapted by Ciaran McMenamin from his novel of the same name, the film takes pleasure in referencing real-world people and places, with Portrush's iconic Kelly's featuring in a particularly laugh-out-loud scene. The film doesn't shy away from the very real backdrop of the Troubles, but offers an optimistic take on the simple joys of partying with your pals. With heartfelt and humour-filled performances from a fantastic supporting cast including Michael Smiley, Jamie-Lee O'Donnell, Hope Ikpoku Jr, Martin McCann, Roisin Gallagher, Gerard Jordan, Tara-Lynne O'Neill and Lalor Roddy.

Thursday 4 November, 6.30pm, Cineworld, £12/£10

You'll Never Believe Who's Dead

Director Dallan Shovlin, 90 Minutes

It's Christmas time, but the Cosgrove family aren't having a very merry one. The family has fallen on tough times and jobs are hard to come by. After hearing about a robbery gone awry, they amuse themselves by imagining robbing one of the neighbours. Farmer Charlie Bann is bound to have money, sure, and he'd be an easy one to knock off, surely... Fuelled by Christmas spirit and desperation, the sons decide to follow through on their scheme, dragging the rest of the Cosgroves with them. Director Dallan Shovlin makes his feature debut with this delightfully dark comedy, smartly melding the thrilling mechanics of a heist film with a keen social sense of contemporary Ireland. The film never forgets the stark economic realities forcing the Cosgrove family into delinquency. The family is brought to life by an all-star cast of Irish talent, featuring Michelle Fairley and Ardal O'Hanlon as the matriarch and patriarch respectively, with Jacob McCarthy, Ruth Codd and Peter Claffey as their children. The elusive and reclusive Charlie Bann is portrayed by this year's Réalta Award winner Stephen Rea.

Tuesday 3 November, 7.00pm, Cineworld, £12/£10

Réalta Award, Stephen Rea

Belfast Film Festival is proud to honour one of Ireland's most cherished and enduring actors, Stephen Rea, with this year's Réalta Award. A long-time friend and supporter of the festival, Rea needs no introduction. Adored by audiences and admired across film, television and theatre alike, he has given us five extraordinary decades of unforgettable performances. Rea's achievements speak for themselves: three IFTA Awards, an Academy Award nomination, three BAFTA nominations, and the BAFTA for Best Supporting Actor in 2015. His iconic screen credits include *The Crying Game*, *Michael Collins*, *The Butcher Boy*, *In Dreams*, *Interview with the Vampire*, *Breakfast on Pluto* and *Greta*. This year, audiences can catch him in Sean Murray's *The Lost City*, which opens this year's Belfast Film Festival and Dallan Shovlin's *You'll Never Believe Who's Dead*. His impact on Irish theatre runs just as deep. In 1980, Rea co-founded the Field Day Theatre Company alongside Tom Paulin, Brian Friel, Seamus Heaney and Seamus Deane, helping shape a defining chapter in Irish cultural life. He continues to grace the stages of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, the Royal Court and the National Theatre in London, and will bring Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* to Théâtre de la Ville – Paris Les Abbesses from 3–7 November 2026.

Join us for an unmissable In Conversation event with Stephen Rea, followed by the presentation of the Réalta Award, a fitting celebration of a truly remarkable career in Irish and international film, television and theatre. We are absolutely delighted to honour Stephen at this year's Belfast Film Festival.

Thursday 29 October, 5.00pm, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

New Cinema

Rose

Director Markus Schleinzer, 94 minutes

There's another incredible performance from one of the greatest actors of our time in this film. Sandra Huller (*Anatomy of a Fall*, *Fatherland*, *The Zone of Interest*, *Toni Erdmann*), plays the central character, Rose, who decides to live her life as a man. In the 17th Century, after fighting as a soldier in the 30 Years War in central Europe, Rose arrives in a rural village and lays claim to a rambling, disused farmhouse and its surrounding land. As a landowner of standing in the small community, Rose must appease her neighbours by abiding by traditional customs and upholding the usual duties expected of a man with property. The film is a clever and thought-provoking exploration of gender roles and social conventions, and is the third feature

from a filmmaker whose previous work has daringly explored challenging subjects from paedophilia (Michael) to race and privilege in an 18th Century Viennese court (Angelo).

Thursday 7 November, 8.30pm, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

A Long Winter

Director Andrew Haigh, 117 minutes

A firm favourite of the festival team, Andrew Haigh returns with this patient, elegiac period piece based on the short story by Colm Toibin. When Mike returns to his family's remote mountain home after time away, he finds an imbalance in the family dynamic. After his mother disappears, the remaining men in the household find themselves dominated by her absence, as Mike's self-exploration mirrors his search for his missing mother. Following from Haigh's extraordinary *All of Us Strangers*, and with a stand-out performance from Fred Hechinger as Mike, and a fantastic supporting cast including Kit Connor, D'Pharaoh Woon-A-Tai and Caitriona Balfe (Belfast) as Mike's mother, Louise. This is a film that typifies Haigh's tender and intimate filmmaking style, and continues his sensitive and empathetic exploration of masculinity.

Tuesday 3 November, 5.45PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

Wild Horse Nine

Director Martin McDonagh, 118 Minutes

Martin McDonagh returns with another tragicomic two-hander with a razor-sharp script and outstanding performances from a stellar cast. After the success of *The Banshees of Inisherin*, McDonagh has turned his attention to Chile in the 1970s, where two CIA men discuss morality and mortality during a dispatch to the vanishingly remote and metaphorically rich Easter Island. With John Malkovich as the ailing Chris, mentor to Sam Rockwell's Lee, and idiosyncratic support from Steve Buscemi, Parker Posey and Tom Waits, the film is an accidental allegory for present-day politics with trademark bittersweet notes, sweeping landscapes and strategically-placed horses.

Friday 30 October, 6.00PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

All Of A Sudden

Director Ryusuke Hamaguchi, 196 Minutes

The peerless director of *Drive My Car* and *Evil Does Not Exist*, Ryusuke Hamaguchi, returns with another deeply considered and exquisitely paced drama. His first film set in Europe, it follows the story

of nursing home director, Marie-Lou, who, while at a professional impasse, meets terminally ill playwright, Mari. The two women forge a friendship based on shared language, experience and a desire to understand the world and attempt to make it better. A humane film that touches on the profound while being firmly rooted in everyday experience. Themes of aging, illness, care and empathy, art, communication and the human ability to reason are expertly offered with poise and grace. The two leads, Virginie Efira and Tao Okamoto, jointly won the Best Actress prize at the Cannes Film Festival earlier this year.

Saturday 7 November, 2.30PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

Coward

Director Lukas Dhont, 120 Minutes

Another delicate two-hander about young men finding each other and exploring their sexuality from the master of elegant storytelling, Lukas Dhont (Close). This time a period piece set during the First World War, it follows the lives of two soldiers as they form a close bond while part of a theatre troupe entertaining their fellow comrades in the Belgian army. The stifling hierarchy and discipline of the army, homophobia and the horrors of war combine and pose the question, what is bravery and what is Cowardice? Starring Emmanuel Macchia and Valentin Campagne as the two romantic leads, they jointly won the Best Actor award for the film's tender and self-controlled performances at the Cannes Film Festival earlier this year.

Wednesday 4 November, 8.45PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

Mouse

Director Kelly O'Sullivan and Alex Thompson, 120 Minutes

A beautifully-acted story of teenaged girl Minnie finding solace in her best friend's mother as they both grieve, with the huge talent of Sophie Okonedo, and newcomer Katherine Mallen Kupferer in an impressively well-rounded role. The film affectionately presents a range of fully fleshed-out female characters, including overly-dramatic teenaged girls navigating rocky emotional terrain, and middle-aged mothers with a lot on their minds. There is a sweetness to both schoolgirl Minnie's romantic efforts and blundering errors, all the while revealing a broader astute take on the class system and life's expectations. With a through-line of humour and never giving into the cliches of cinematic grief, this is a coming-of-all-ages story about adapting to unexpected change with bravery, heart and wit. You will want to hug every character and make them your best friends a truly feel-good film

Saturday November, 6.00PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

Faraway Home

Terry Loane, 98 Minutes

Karl and Rose are two young Jewish children who escape Nazi-occupied Vienna via Kindertransport. They are brought to Northern Ireland to the Millisle refugee farm, where they find it hard to adjust to homesickness and the isolation of country living. Slowly but surely, they get used to the rhythms of rural life, finding friends and a sense of family among the other refugees. But the war isn't over, and it isn't long before the Belfast Blitz in 1941 brings the horrors of war back to face them. This moving drama, adapted from the novel by Marilyn Taylor, is based on a true story. It is brought to life by director Terry Loane who returns to the festival after his previous film *The Last Rifleman* screened in 2023; another story paying tribute to unlikely acts of heroism during war. Featuring brilliant performances from a young cast of newcomers, the film captures both the relief of escape and the immense tragedy of events. *Faraway Home* highlights an important story from our local history, one that is not as well known as it should be.

Thursday 5 November, 6.00PM, Odeon, £12/£10

Minotaur

Director Andrey Zvyagintsev, 135 Minutes

Andrey Zvyagintsev (*Leviathan*, *Loveless*) returns once again to cast his critical gaze on Russia in our bleak present times. Set in a provincial Russian town during the onset of the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and made outside Russia with support from France, Latvia and Germany, this noir-esque thriller centres around a middle-class businessman who suspects his wife of having an affair. With his staff members disappearing to escape being drafted into the army, and pressure from local government to provide soldiers from his workforce, small-town executive Gleb is growing more concerned with matters at home. The film is based on Claude Chabrol's *The Unfaithful Wife* from 1969, and shows how expert filmmaking can produce a quiet slow-build of dramatic tension.

Tuesday 3 November, 8.45PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

Enjoy Your Stay

Directors Dominik Locher and Honeylyn Joy Alipio, 99 Minutes

The experience of undocumented Filipino women in Europe is captured with urgency and humanity in this third feature by Swiss filmmaker, Dominik Locher. Together with Filipino screenwriter, Honeylyn Joy Alipio, they have crafted and captured the real-world dynamic between luxury Alpine resorts and the low-wage workers drafted in to keep them running. The story centres on

Luz, who walks an emotional tightrope between the exploitative and illegal nature of her working life in Switzerland while feeling the pull of her young daughter still in the Philippines, and manipulative partner who is using a reality TV show to publicly shame her. The community of women workers around her offer comfort and complications, as she tries to climb the career ladder in a world filled with false promises and inequalities.

Wednesday 4 November, 7.00PM, The Avenue, £16

The Dreamed Adventure

Director Valeska Grisebach, 167 Minutes

An archaeologist gets ever more intertwined in the dealings of local gangsters in this understated work from Valeska Grisebach (Western). As the story unfolds near an archaeological dig on the border between Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, the transience of such a frontier space becomes apparent in the comings and goings of characters, the significance of memory and past relationships, and the timelessness of found objects. Most of all, it is Yana Radeva's performance as the impressive and unshakeable Veska, a middle-aged woman holding her ground in this dusty, arid, and at times intraversable landscape of macho power-play, that explains the film's deserved success in the European festival circuit this year, including the Jury Prize at Cannes.

Sunday 1 November, 8.30PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

How to Divorce During the War

Director. Andrius Blazelevicius, 108 Minutes

One of two films in this year's programme set at the advent of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, this film takes a warm and well-measured look at one family's everyday problems during an exceptional time in European history. Set in Vilnius in 2022, married couple Marija and Vytas decide to divorce. The next day, Russia invades Ukraine, and Lithuania is suddenly in the throes of an international crisis. With a daughter asking questions and Ukrainian refugees to take care of, how will they navigate their 'new normal'? This funny and moving slice of real life is a fantastic Irish co-production, and is Lithuania's entry for the 2027 Oscars.

Thursday 29 November, 6.20PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

Everytime

Director Sandra Wollner, 119 Minutes

The upcoming Austrian director with a singular vision, Sandra Wollner, returns with her latest film, a story of a family tragedy, a trip to Tenerife in the hope of finding existential answers, and one woman's relationship with her daughters and a teenaged family friend. With reference to small, personal gestures that almost go unnoticed, patterns of behaviour, and the deeply forged bonds of childhood, youth and parenthood, the film captures the precarity of young life and the mystery of memory while being continually surprising and captivating, like a meandering dream. It's a moving film with a quietly bold style and non-traditional method of storytelling, set against the backdrop of both urban Berlin's sleek lines and the rugged volcanic coastline of Tenerife's north coast. The film was screened at the Cannes Film Festival earlier this year where it won the prestigious Un Certain Regard award for emerging filmmakers, and is the German entry for the 2027 Oscars.

Saturday 7 November, 3.30PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

The Story of Documentary Film, The 1980's

Director Mark Cousins, 120 Minutes

After premiering his widely anticipated longform documentary at various international festivals (including Docs Ireland) earlier this year, Mark Cousins excitingly returns to Belfast Film Festival with another chapter. Following on from his hugely influential, 15-hour *The Story of Film: An Odyssey*, and the subsequent, *A Story of Children and Film*, and *Women Make Film: A New Road Movie Through Cinema*, Cousins continues his exploration of cinematic landscapes with this new journey through documentary history. Weaving through time, culture and place with his singular, inspirational passion for the medium, the chapter looks at documentary-making of the 1980s during the fall of the Soviet regime and the rise of the music documentary. Not to be missed!

Friday 6 November, 5.45PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

Establishing Shots

Nuisance Bear

Director Gabriela Osio Vanden and Jack Weisman, 90 Minutes

The plight of the polar bear is captured with style and grace in this documentary that highlights the tragedy and beauty of the natural world in the era of man-made climate change. Filmed in and around Churchill, Manitoba and Arviat, Nunavut, on the shores of Hudson Bay in Canada, it follows the migration of polar bears driven onto land by the melted sea ice, searching for food.

Always at a remove and without judgement, the film displays a complex arrangement of tourism, wildlife management and traditional culture, and the growing tension between human activity and the diminishing tundra that leaves less and less room for these charismatic, otherworldly bears. With incredible photography from filmmakers Gabriela Osio Vanden and Jack Weisman, and music by The White Lotus composer, Cristobal Tapia de Veer

Saturday 7 November, 12.15PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

A Prayer For the Dying

Director Dara Van Dusen, 96 Minutes

This sparse and spiky western set in 1870s Wisconsin is the story of a sheriff's struggle between duty and family in the face of a diphtheria outbreak. When a drifter is found dead on the outskirts of town, it becomes apparent a deadly disease is doing the rounds. With the town's doctor and sheriff divided on what to do, the town's future is in doubt. The film has emotional resonance in a post-pandemic age, and a daring, against-type performance from the irrepressible John C Reilly as the town's exhausted doctor.

Sunday 1 November | 3.00PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

Yesterday The Eye Didn't Sleep

Director Rakan Mayasi, 100 Minutes

This extraordinary debut from filmmaker Rakan Mayasi follows the story of two sisters whose lives become caught up in the after-effects of a violent dispute between two rival clans. Set on the Syria-Lebanon border, an accidental death sets off a chain of events that reveals the strength and dedication of women disempowered by the traditions that surround them. With subtle and authentic performances from real-life Al Mawla family members, the film was inspired by Mayasi's own family history in the story of his late grandmother's forced marriage. Deservedly nominated for the Camera d'Or, the prestigious prize for first features at the Cannes Film Festival, the film's innovative approach to visual storytelling is simultaneously urgent, poetic and produces images that will remain with you long after the film has ended.

Sunday 1 November, 3.15PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

Our Share of Sand

Director Shalini Adnani, 96 Minutes

When twelve year old Maya returns to rural India with her mother, she reconnects with her

estranged father. When an accident at his sand mining business reveals inequalities between her family and the local community, Maya's mother descends into angst-ridden guilt, while Maya decides to confront things her own way. A fantastic directorial debut, the film effectively portrays the adult world from the perspective of a child. Using the elemental backdrop of earth and water as its stylistic underpinning, this beautiful film flows steadily towards its gut-wrenching climax.

Tuesday 3 November, 7.00PM, The Avenue, £16

Our House

Director Peter Young, 89 Minutes

Three siblings return to the family home after the death of their mother. Practically estranged, they're happy to go their separate ways once the funeral is done and dusted. The tables are turned however when a solicitor reveals that their mother altered her will prior to passing on, deciding to split her house between them instead of giving it solely to Thomas, who cared for her in later years. They subsequently fall into an inheritance battle that turns bitter, absurd, and eventually deadly. Our House is the debut feature of writer & director Peter Young, a stalwart of the festival, and the talent seen in his previous short film work is here in full display. The film blends elements of dark comedy and thriller seamlessly, yet never neglecting the emotional core. Despite the claustrophobic setting, we never feel boxed in. The central trio of Michael Shea, Hannah McClean and Andy Doherty are funny and devastating in star-making turns, fully embodying the sharp rapport between family who love & hate each other. The supporting cast is rounded out by Colin Connor, Kerri Quinn and Paddy Jenkins in a scene-stealing turn as an indignant taxi driver. This confident and stylish debut is a testament to the wealth of talent in the North. After opening this year's Galway Film Fleadh, we are thrilled to be hosting this hometown gala screening.

Monday 2 November, 6.30PM, Odeon, £12/£10

A Man of his Time

Director Emmanuel Marre, 155 Minutes

Swann Arlaud (Anatomy of A Fall) gives an effectively inexplicit performance as a man making his way up the career ladder of the Vichy government, the regime in occupied France that collaborated with the Nazis during World War II. Arriving in 1940 with his self-published manifesto, Notre Salut, Henri Marre attempts to ingratiate himself with the new Vichy elite, eventually gaining a comfortable position in middle-management. Based on letters written by the director's own great-grandfather, the film is a broadened out imagining of a man about whom little is known. A vague and ambiguous anti-hero, Henri drifts along with the status quo as the war continues and the atmosphere within his bureaucratic office begins to shift. This is a perspective of the Second World War rarely centred in cinema, offering a truly relevant allegory for the political climate of our current age.

Monday 2 November, 8.45PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

Master

Director Rezwan Shahriar Sumit, 126 Minutes

In forested rural Bangladesh, Jahir is a popular and idealistic teacher making a foray into local politics. When he is elected, he is confronted with hard truths, compromise and the hierarchy of power and positions of influence. With his young family at home beginning to worry, and friends who helped his election campaign starting to feel less essential than the local businessmen, will Jahir succumb to the seduction, and violence, of power? A bold film that skillfully uses colour, real administrative locations and local inhabitants to bring this vibrant and complex world to the screen. With systemic corruption of local politics in Bangladesh at its core, the film's themes of family, ambition and disillusionment run broadly. Winner of the Big Screen Award at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, 2026.

Sunday 1 November, 5:45PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

Long Short Weekend

Competition Shorts

Programme One

Like Me

Director Ais Brady, 10 minutes

Alor is young and frustrated, trying to figure out life while awkwardly drifting through parties with a mask covering her face. When she meets the charismatic Timur, the possibility of a life unencumbered by façades and shame changes her perception forever. A sweet and tender drama about embracing the beauty of life in all its forms, even a scarf blowing in the breeze of the night.

In Between

Director Hannah Mamalis, 14 minutes

Anna's life is coming to an end. But don't worry too much, another Anna will replace her. Feeling wistful in her final moments, Anna writes a letter for her successor containing her observations, her advice, her humble pleasures and her guilty pleasures. Director Hannah Mamalis distills the sweet absurdities of modern life into this surreal fable, perhaps you too will learn something along the way.

Stuck

Director Will Peppercorn, 11 minutes

A plucky young journalist is looking for a good-news story. Instead he stumbles upon a viciously bitter feud between two neighbouring farmers. Spotting an opportunity, the eternal optimist seeks to bury the hatchet between these rural rivals and return to the newspaper victorious. Michael Smiley and Paddy Jenkins star as the fierce farmers stuck in a hubristic clash of personalities.

Mary got Fingered

Director Sarah Gordon, 12 minutes

Mary gets accused of being a witch. The rumour spreads like wildfire and she must defend herself against a rabble of restless villagers looking for any excuse to burn something at the stake. This scathing tale of small-town minds meeting the dangerous force of mob mentality is very timely, despite its brilliantly realised period setting.

Saturday 31 October, Programme 1, 11:30AM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

Competition Shorts

Programme Two

Shush, Now

Director Craig Austin Reynolds, 12 minutes

This gently observed coming-of-age tale follows a seven year old girl learning firsthand what secrets mean. From little white lies to earth-shattering revelations, Kara watches on quietly as she discovers the complex nature of truth, and the harsh realities of growing up. An exercise in restrained naturalism, the film is anchored around its brilliant central performance where so much is conveyed through the mere flutter of an eye.

Field Queens

Director Áine Ryan, 15 Minutes

One hungover morning, two fifteen year old girls find themselves cleaning the vomit out of a minibus from the night before. Whilst they analyse their nocturnal mishaps, the bus driver's wife appears and invites them for a drink in a field. This microcosm of a young friendship encountering an old soul becomes a barbed consideration of alcohol as a way of life in rural Ireland, and the sadness and hurt that lies beneath the national stereotype.

The Lacey Way

Director Regina De Faoite, 17 minutes

The Lacey family live in a sheltered utopia. They work/learn/play at home, they say and do as Mammy Lacey says and does. But the eldest daughter George wants to go dancing, and this simple desire tears apart the family, and their cloistered world, entirely. This cautionary tale is sprinkled with moments of transcendent beauty, embodying the excitement and awe of discovering the world for yourself, and the terror of the unknown.

Saturday 31 October, Programme 2, 1.00PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

Competition Shorts

Programme Three

A Knock at your Door

Director Alan Hopkins, 16 Minutes

An injured teenager arrives at the door of a nurse and her boyfriend. While she tends to his wounds, her boyfriend becomes inundated with messages and tweets and stories and videos of hate and conspiracy and violence. According to his algorithm, this boy is the reason for it all, and mobs begin appearing at their front door. This timely drama has its finger on the pulse of our hate-inflicted age of paranoia, striking right at the pit of the stomach.

Bog Communism

Director Roisin Agnew, 8 Minutes

The subversive history of bogs in Ireland becomes a call to action, as the poisonous spread of data centres across the island is considered and resisted. Blending archive footage with 3D visuals, the film brilliantly reveals how the tendrils of colonialism have bled their way into the building blocks of capitalism forecasting a bleak future, one ruled over by parasitic machines hellbent on draining the environment/the culture/the world of energy & ideas.

Hostile Architecture

Director Liadán Roche, 16 Minutes

As Dublin cannibalises itself out to private interests and shady corporations, two trans lovers find an unexpected solution to the Irish housing crisis. It may not be permanent, but it'll do for the night. Sexy and surreal, the film dives into the phantasmagoric unknown of mystic 'third spaces' and the innate horror of trying to live in a city that doesn't care about you.

A Pint of Bitter

Director Conor Kehelly, 9 Minutes

You go for a simple pint, sipping down that sweet nectar, when a peevish punter takes issue with the cut of your jib. From the perspective of a pint glass, a minor argument becomes a cosmic destruction of the self and a reckoning with the towering figure of the 'old Irish fella' in Irish culture. Where some people find Jesus at the bottom of a bottle, Kehelly discovers richly comic yet poignant material, rendering his findings through a beautifully anarchic animation style.

Saturday 31 October, Programme 3, 2.30PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Can

Competition Shorts

Programme Four

Silvering

Marie-Thérèse Mackle, 17 minutes

Jamesie, a Lough Neagh fisherman, yearns for a past that slowly slips away from him. Living on the banks of the lough with his daughter caring for him, he tries repeatedly to return to the water but is repeatedly stopped in his tracks. When he eventually makes it out amidst the rolling fog, the history and the folklore of the lake are revealed. Jim Norton stars in this moving elegy to the Lough, and the many lives it has seen and sustained on its banks.

Sceillec

Director Paul Rutledge, 4 minutes

In this bewitching portrait of a remote Irish island, a meditation on Irish life and Irish land, days of yore unfurl and meld with the present. Fishermen, monks and tourists collide and time seems to collapse entirely. Featuring a delicately designed soundscape, and a beautifully minimalist animation style, you'll reach out and wish you were there.

The Galley

Director Thomas Bennett, 16 minutes

Helen is made redundant from her job at the amusements. Falling on tough times, she resorts to a victimless crime to get by. The ghost town of Portrush off-season sets the stage for this intimately observed drama, brought to life with honesty and vulnerability, by stars Bríd Brennan & Seán T. Ó Meallaigh.

U Home?x

Director Edel McCormick and Erin O'Rawe, 15 minutes

A woman listens to a true crime podcast on her commute home. Through uniquely terrifying sound design, every moment, glance and interaction becomes charged. Danger lurks around every corner, the ironic American hosts tell us so. This nerve-wracking piece considers the banal horrors of podcasting & true crime, and the flattening of real life atrocities into passive-entertainment for the masses.

Saturday 31 October, Programme 4, 4.00 PM, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

New Irish Shorts, Programme One

MOULDING FERGAL

Director Christopher McSherry, 6 minutes

Housepainter Fergal finds a spot of mould in his bedroom. Nothing a lick of paint wouldn't fix. But the mould comes back aggressively, and Fergal soon finds himself fighting for his life and his sanity. His battle against the dark crevices of the mind is told through lovingly handmade stop motion animation.

Mí-Ádh (Bad Luck)

Director Damien McCann, 17 minutes

Down on luck and down on life, taxi driver Seán figures now is the time to end it all. When a woman with a black cat jumps in his cab, he finds his luck changing in unexpected ways. This darkly funny take on mortality and superstition unfolds as a tense yet tender two-hander.

Escape Routes

Director Zoe O'Rourke, 15 mins

This affecting period piece focuses on the relationship between a lonely young girl and her teenage babysitter. Through a shared love of the computer game ZORK, she learns about the big bad world and the urge to run away from it all.

Panganay

Director Alex Gill, 10 mins

A Filipino nurse is late for her shift after picking up her Irish-born daughter. Now stuck in traffic, they butt heads over their different upbringings and perceptions of each other. A smart and incisive examination of diaspora and family.

That's So Feis

Director Eileen Tracey, 16 mins

Millennial Gemma is right on the verge of getting married when her fiancé breaks things off out of the blue. Depressed and dispirited, she soon discovers a new lust for life after taking on Irish dancing, and finding kindred spirit amongst Gen Z teenagers.

Sunday 1 November, Programme 1, 10.30am, Black Box, Pay What You Wish
Due to the nature and content of these programmes, no one under 18 may be permitted.

New Irish Shorts, Programme Two

The Building Is Not Empty

Director Dara Oliver, 11 mins

A film crew's arrival in the historic Riddel's Warehouse awakens the sleeping soul of the building, unlocking the past and releasing the spirits and stories of those who have passed through. A sharply written and thoughtfully composed journey through the echoes of history.

ManRayWomanRay

Director Matthew Hardy, 3 mins

An essay on fragments/a fragmented tribute to the photographer/rayographer Man Ray. This audacious/insightful/incisive short captures the spirit of the man/his work with striking beauty and brevity.

CHARITY!

Director Stephen T. Lally, 15 mins

Sensitive singer/songwriter Bridget is churned through the capitalist machine and becomes CHARITY: a Y2K Pop Princess with a capital P. When she tries to break free from the suffocation of fame and fortune, she is subjected to a surreal odyssey of boybands, body horror and banging tunes.

bailey.banshee

Director Jack Warren, 7 mins

Trans YouTuber Bailey leaves America for Ireland, but as she documents her new life in Dublin, strange happenings occur in the background. The evil tourist simulacra of Temple Bar on St. Patrick's Day provides the backdrop for this uncanny odyssey into the dark heart of the Fair City.

Piggy

Director Lisa Freeman, 5 mins

A spoken word meditation on our current culture of convenience and exploitation. Repeated images of racetrack greyhounds and Porky Pig echo and fragment across the screen, distorting our perception of the images and even our understanding of 'same-day delivery.'

Log Off, Loser!

Director Heath Virgoe, 11 mins

Schoolboy Noah finds liberation in the simulation, expressing through an online avatar what he is unable to in real life. This visually inventive and wholesome coming-of-age story harks back to a time when the World Wide Web was still a place for excitement and exploration.

Serenade

Director Fergus Boylan, 2 mins

A lonely civil servant gets a visit from a crooning cowboy in this brief but beautiful animation ruminating on longing and love songs.

Sunday 1 November, Programme 2, 12.30pm, Black Box, Pay What You Wish

Due to the nature and content of these programmes, no one under 18 may be permitted.

New Irish Shorts, Programme Three

OBSTRUCTOR

Director Paul Kennedy, 7 minutes

In this highly-strung experiment in tension, a car stops another car. The drivers talk. Or do they argue? The answers are just out of reach in this unnervingly ambient thriller, featuring uncanny visuals alongside a haunting soundscape.

LISTEN

Director Tracy Martin, 13 minutes

After being picked up from work, a mother is told a devastating truth that she must keep secret. For the sake of the family. Touching on social media frenzy and male violence, a stomach-churning drama unfolds within the claustrophobic confines of a car.

Blink

Director Olivia Normile, 3 minutes

The act of blinking is considered as a form of editing in this expressive piece rich in texture and imagery. We are presented with a series of striking yet mysterious compositions for a few fleeting moments. Let them seep into your subconscious before it's too late.

Resonance

Director Benedict Godard, 13 mins

In this aural nightmare, Lily struggles to control her tinnitus while composing the score for an unearthed silent film. She soon discovers something lurking within the celluloid itself, something unnerving that she can't unhear.

This Happened

Director Stuart Drennan, 9 mins

One lad tells another lad a crazy story about a stranger who snuck into his flat after a night out, and wait 'til you hear what happened next... A bitta craic over a pint becomes an uncomfortable confrontation and a pointed examination of masculinity and coercion.

More

Director Kurt Dean-Darby, 15 mins

In this delightfully delirious horror, a mysteriously mystic box of cereal arrives in the life of a recovering alcoholic. Though harmless at first, those seemingly wholesome wholegrain hoops soon wreak havoc, leaving blood, guts and milk in their wake.

Sunday 1 November, Programme 3, 2.30pm, Black Box, Pay What You Wish

New Irish Shorts, Programme Four

Reborn

Director Alannah McNamee, 14 mins

Two women meet in a park, seemingly with nothing in common, yet they forge an unexpected and unshakeable bond. This compassionate piece runs the gamut of human emotion, insightfully touching on love, loss, longing and loneliness.

Sasquatch

Director Katie Bridget Murphy, 11 mins

In this bright and breezy comedy of yearning and shoe sizes, shy office worker Emily has a crush on her colleague but is too scared to do anything about it. After a chance encounter, she listens to her inner hype-woman and steps into the unknown.

Bootlickers

Director Tanith Mh, 15 mins

After her evil landlord threatens to evict the entire household, unemployed Steph desperately tries to scrape together the cash to save them all. Begging, busking, betting it all on a cash call, she'll do anything to keep her house together.

pulse

Director Sam Nut, 16 mins

Heather is slowly returning to normality after undergoing a heart transplant, but something is not quite right. Whether it's in the unknown tune stuck in her head, or the 'sláinte' which slips from her lips, she finds herself questioning her entire way of life.

Me, Myself & Mary

Director John Mitchell, 13 mins

An adaptation of the viral tweet thread by Séamas O'Reilly, this vivid and lively animation tells the true story of a young lad who mixes up his days at work and ends up alone in a room with his boss and the President of Ireland. Oh and he's also high on drugs.

Sunday 1 November, Programme 4, 4.30pm, Black Box, Pay What You Wish

Damien McCarthy Masterclass

We are thrilled to welcome Damian McCarthy, the twisted mind behind ODDITY, CAVEAT and most recently HOKUM, to this year's festival to take part in a directing masterclass as part of our Long Short Weekend. McCarthy's career began with some skin-crawling shorts which screened and won awards at festivals around the world. His feature debut, CAVEAT, screened in 2020 before being added to Shudder and becoming a worldwide sensation. He followed this with ODDITY in 2024, before his biggest feature yet in HOKUM, starring Adam Scott. Despite his meteoric rise, his work retains a deeply Irish sensibility: darkly humorous and versed in folklore, scratching at that paranoid, uncomfortable itch at the back of the brain. The conversation will be moderated by actor, writer and director Clare Monnelly (star of Aislinn Clarke's FRÉWAKA). Featuring some of Damian's shorts,

some clips from his films, and some from the work that inspired him, this will be an indispensable evening for filmmakers and film fans alike. This masterclass is sponsored by Northern Ireland Screen.

Friday 30 October, 6pm, Black Box, Pay What You Wish

Experimental Shorts

Movement & Translations

We are very excited to be collaborating with The Masonic Screen (formerly The Shankill Screen) on this screening of three new, exciting experimental works in Vault's newest location in East Belfast.

The Glass Booth by Jenny Brady considers the role of interpretation in society. What must we consider when translating from one language to another? How do you paraphrase an emotion? How does rally car driving fit into all of this?

Bodyverses — Alastair MacLennan: Nalam Nalam by Juana Robles is part of an ongoing series collaborating with performance artists across Ireland. This piece focuses on MacLennan, whose body-based "actuations" explore personal, cultural, and social experience through performance, drawing, installation, and found materials

Go Ye Afar by Frank Sweeney follows an Irish-Nigerian taxi driver as he embarks on a magical realist odyssey from Dublin to Calabar. Through back-seat confessionals and a miraculous continent-hopping car, we learn about Ireland's dark past in the country and the corporate interests driving it all.

Saturday 7th November, 6pm, Masonic Screen, Pay What You Wish

Films by Helena Gouveia Monteiro

Helena Gouveia Monteiro is an experimental filmmaker and visual artist from Portugal, currently living in Dublin. She creates films, books, and multi-media installations that engage different levels of visual and cultural recognition to question our perception of language and audio-visual experiences. We are screening four of her recent works, showing the range of her analogue and digital experimentation and her ongoing interest in materiality and the sensory possibilities of film:

ends meet (2025)

SKINFLICKER (2024)

Man of Aral (2023)

Purkyně's Dusk (2021)

Helena will also be running an introduction to Super 8 film workshop, see page 61 for more.

Saturday 7 November, 2pm, Beanbag Cinema, £6/4

Student Archive Showcase. Past Scenes, Future Screens.

This showcase brings together a selection of short films from students at Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast, presented in partnership with Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive. Spanning fiction, documentary and experimental work, these shorts bring together our screen heritage of the past with the filmmaking talent of the future.

Saturday 31 October, 12pm, Ulster University, Free with booking required.

Long Short Closing Party

We invite all filmmakers to our closing event of the weekend: our awards reception where we will announce the winner for Best Short and the recipient of the LUMI Award. We are thrilled to be returning to The Watson bar this year, so this will be the perfect chance to have a couple of drinks, talk about the great work you've seen and hatch some schemes to make the next film!

Sunday 2 November, 6pm, Watson Bar, Free

Altered States

The Peril At Pincer Point

Directors Noah Stratton-Twine & Jake Cuhn, UK, 83 minutes, 2026

Crustaceans... Corman... Cardioid microphones, The Peril at Pincer Point has it all! Plucky young Jim Baitte is sound-man on a hotly anticipated horror film. However his easy-going ways have put him behind on work and directly in the firing line. He gets one more chance to save his job: travel to the spectral isle of Pincer Point and capture the best sound ever recorded. This seemingly simple task is suddenly muddled by myths and missing persons, and Jim finds himself caught up in prophecies and plots beyond his comprehension. Why are there crabs everywhere? Could the legend of the ghost pirates be true? Is this what Coppola felt like in Hearts of Darkness? With shades of Bait & Blow-Up & maybe even Barton Fink, Pincer Point is a loving tribute to the importance of making art. From reveling in the means of its gloriously handmade production, to the task at hand of Jim's

oddity-ridden odyssey, that of listening to people and connecting with them, AI could never make a film like *The Peril at Pincer Point*. Take our sound advice and see it.

Friday 6 November, 9pm, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

Dry Leaf

Director Alexandre Koberidze, Georgia, 186 minutes, 2025

Filmed entirely on a Sony Ericsson phone - yes, an old one - this is a stylistic exploration of the rich rural landscape of post-Soviet Georgia. Following the story of a man who is searching for his photographer daughter, this low-res film has a distinctly impressionistic aesthetic and painterly quality in the softly pixelated natural world it presents. As he searches for her by following her route in and around the abandoned football pitches she was photographing for a magazine spread, our eyes are opened to the methodical repetition of travel, the meditative and therapeutic connection we have to the world beyond our cities, and the road movie as a chance to slow down and take in the world in all its quiet wonder. This is simultaneously an impressive technical feat and a refreshing reversal of digital advancement, aspects that come together to press pause on the present-day world so it can be truly appreciated.

Wednesday 4 November, 6pm, Beanbag Cinema, Pay What You Wish

Maddie's Secret w/ Normal Cinema Club

Director John Early, USA, 100 minutes, 2026

Normal Cinema Club is excited to return to Belfast Film Festival with one of the funniest and most heartbreaking films of the year. Maddie Ralph works as a dishwasher at Gourmaybe, a test kitchen/content creation lab, though secretly she dreams of a life as a viral chef, creating reels and recipes for millions of adoring fans. Fortune shines fondly on Maddie and she skyrockets into fame, becoming one of the lab's on-camera personalities. But soon the success turns sour, and the intense scrutiny that comes with a life lived online manipulates and tortures Maddie's sense of self. *Maddie's Secret* is many things at once: absurdist comedy, razor-sharp satire, deeply sincere melodrama, a love letter to American TV movies as much as John Waters as much as Douglas Sirk - John Early's ability to walk this tightrope without one false note is what makes the film so singular. Furthermore, he writes, stars, produces and directs in what is sure to be one of the most egregious snubs of the Oscars race. Why? They hate true talent. The cast is rounded out by numerous shining stars: Kate Berlant, Eric Rahill and friend of the club, Conner O'Malley. Simply put, there's no reason to miss one of the definitive films of our current age. Trigger Warning: the film contains depictions of disordered eating, self-harm & suicide.

Tuesday 3 November, 7pm, Beanbag Cinema, Pay What You Wish

Star Nhà Ease present The Inseminator

Director Bùi Kim Quy, Vietnam, 87 minutes, 2014

In this magical-realist portrait of patriarchy, a father living in rural Vietnam grows increasingly afraid for his 16-year-old son, Ngo, who has an intellectual disability. As he faces his own mortality and the limits of what he can control, he becomes fixated on the idea that Ngo will never find a suitable wife, and that without a male heir, their family line will end. His worry turns into obsession, pushing him toward unusual and otherworldly methods to secure a bride for his son. Blending everyday rural life with surreal, imaginative visuals, the film explores care, tradition, and fear. It was banned soon after its release in Vietnam. The screening will be introduced by Tuyết Vân Huỳnh from Star Nhà Ease, a nationwide film and contemporary arts programme bringing Vietnamese cinematic gems, music, poetry and beyond to UK audiences.

Thursday 5 November, 6pm, Queens Film Theatre | Pay What You Wish

Oh The Horror

HOKUM Live Commentary

After his masterclass event (see page 40), we are very excited to welcome director Damian McCarthy and editor Brian Philip Davis to take part in a live commentary of their horror hit HOKUM. Arrogant and alienating American novelist Ohm Bauman (the wickedly talented Adam Scott) travels to Ireland to spread his parents' ashes. He stays in the same quaint Irish inn where they spent their honeymoon. Whilst getting drunk and annoying the locals, he becomes entranced by folk tales of a witch trapped in the very hotel he is staying in. When a woman disappears, he is drawn into the mysteries and horrors that lie beneath the surface of this quaint hotel, and the disturbing secrets from his own suppressed past. Damian and Brian will introduce the film before telling all about the nitty-gritty of crafting a horror film. Commentating live, they'll provide behind-the-scenes stories and insight on their creative process.

Friday 30 October, 8.30pm, Black Box, Pay What You Wish

Spider Baby

Director Jack Hill, USA, 84 minutes, 1967

Spider Baby, otherwise known as The Maddest Story Ever Told, features horror stars Lon Chaney Jr. and Sid Haig in a bizarre cult-classic that twists tales like The Addams Family into depraved directions. In a lonesome dilapidated house, chauffeur Bruno cares for the Merrye children, all affected by a degenerative illness. When money-grubbing relatives visit unannounced to claim the house as their own, the Merrye family take action into their own hands. After the screening, we will be joined by Disability Action Research Kollektive member Aaliyah Bates and artist and disability activist Deirdre McKenna for a panel discussion exploring how horror can act as reflection of social fears, or as a site of reclamation. Please note this film features negative caricatures of people with disabilities and ableist behaviour.

Saturday 31 October, 1.30pm, Black Box, Pay What You Wish

The People Under the Stairs & Walking Tour

Director Wes Craven, USA, 102 minutes, 1991

Wes Craven's The People Under the Stairs (1991) is a razor-sharp horror satire on Gentrification. More resonant now than upon its release in 1991, it follows a young boy who breaks into the home of two slum landlords, only to explore the horror hidden within their walls. This screening is paired with a cinematic walking tour in collaboration with Catú Belfast. The tour highlights the destructive impact Airbnbs have on communities, and the ongoing housing crisis. Just as importantly, it opens a conversation about what we can do to challenge these pressures. Together, the walking tour and the film create a two-part reflection on the increasing harm caused by landlordism. Audiences can join us for the combined walking tour and screening, or attend the screening on its own.

Saturday 7 November, 6pm, Black Box, Pay What You Wish

TV Eye

The Lough Speaks

If we could hear Lough Neagh speak, what would she say? The widely publicised pollution of the lough has been described as a slow death. The build-up of agricultural poison has formed toxic algal blooms that choke the wild inhabitants of the lough and drive the local community from its shores. But Lough Neagh has been part of our world for 400 million years, and borders five of the six counties. People have been benefitting from its resources since the dawn of civilisation, and stories of the lough are woven into the mythological fabric of Ulster and beyond. This live event juxtaposes Northern Ireland's rich television archive of BBC Northern Ireland and Ulster Television with traditional Irish singing and local journalism to explore the heritage, history and cultural significance of Lough Neagh. With traditional singer Méabh Meir as the voice of Lough Neagh, and spoken word from Tommy Greene, reading from his book, *Troubled Waters: How Lough Neagh Is Being Destroyed by Corporate Greed and Political Neglect*. Curated by Belfast Film Festival programmer, Rose Baker, and edited by Docs Ireland programmer, Stuart Sloan. Footage courtesy of BBC Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive (courtesy of the UTV Partnership project). Explore thousands of BBC archive clips from Northern Ireland and across the UK at bbcrewind.co.uk. Discover Ulster Television, home movies, community films and more at digitalfilmarchive.net.

Sunday 1 November, 8pm, Black Box, Pay What You Wish

The Orange and The Green

Director Jeremy Murray-Brown, UK, 1966

Sixty years ago, Ulster Television produced this documentary in what was the 50th anniversary year of the 1916 Easter Rising. A kind of state-of-the-nation assessment, it was produced for a UK audience and discusses how Northern Ireland and the Republic co-exist after partition. With opinion and comment from contributors in Belfast, Dublin & Cork including Denis Ireland, Cathal O'Shannon and an anonymous member of the IRA, among others. The film traces the impact of the Easter Rising on Ireland, and compares the two recently-formed states on social, economic and cultural grounds, asking the question: Will Ireland ever be reunited? Courtesy of the UTV Archive Partnership between Northern Ireland Screen, ITV and PRONI, supported by the Department for Communities.

Saturday 7 November, 11am, Beanbag Cinema, £6/£4

Bagpuss and Beyond - The History of Smallfilms

Of all the programming from the "golden age of children's television" surely no body of work is so fondly remembered as that of Smallfilms. Narrator/ animator Oliver Postgate and his artist friend Peter Firmin created worlds together which have endured for generations. Bagpuss is consistently voted the nation's favourite children's character, but there were also the Clangers, Ivor the Engine, Noggin the Nog, Pogles' Wood and many more. Outside of his work for Smallfilms, Firmin also designed and created Basil Brush. Northern Ireland Screen's Broadcast Archivist, Evan Marshall, presents the whole history of Smallfilms, from its earliest beginnings to its final works and beyond. Illustrated with

Firmin's magical art and clips from the shows themselves, the talk shines a light on the famous works as well as some of the more forgotten chapters of Smallfilm's history with clips unseen for decades such as Sam on Boffs' Island and Oliver's impassioned anti-nuclear 1980s documentary, Life on Earth, Perhaps.

Sunday 1 November, 3pm, Black Box, Pay What You Wish

Acceptable Levels at Divis

Director John Davies, UK, 100 minutes, 1983

Screening at St Comgall's Ionad Eileen Howell, in the area where it was originally filmed, Acceptable Levels is the result of a collaboration between Kate McManus and Alistair Herron from the Belfast Film Workshop and John Davies, Ellin Hare, and Robert Smith from Frontroom Productions. The film was made through the innovative Channel 4 workshop scheme to fund small-scale independent productions and was the first feature film to be made under this arrangement. It was shot mainly in Belfast by Frontroom Productions and the Belfast Film Workshop using a cast of professional and non-professional actors. The film title comes from a comment made by British Home Secretary Reginald Maudling in the 1970s, that the best that could be hoped for was 'a return to acceptable levels of violence.' The film shows not only what this meant in practice to the community in Belfast, but also the media processes that made it acceptable to the British public. Filmmakers, John Davies, Alistair Herron and Kate McManus will take part in a Q&A after the film.

This screening came about from a collaboration with the Recording History oral history project. Working with the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the Ulster Museum and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), this research foregrounds the work of international artists and filmmakers active in the north of Ireland from 1968. Led by Dr Isobel Harbison, Recording History aims to address under-documented histories of artists' and independent film made in Northern Ireland/ the north of Ireland from 1968 to 1990, and to consider these works in relation to existing national collections, facilities, and archives. The oral history interviews undertaken as part of the project will be preserved and made available at PRONI.

Wednesday 4 November, 7pm, St Comgall's, £6/£4

Film & Anti-Racism

In 2005, Belfast Film Festival presented a publication, and a programme of film and discussion, entitled Film & Racism. In light of the growing racist violence we have seen in our city and beyond in the past few years, we have decided to revisit this programme. This time naming it Film & Anti-racism, the intention is to discuss how cinema can be an active tool towards anti-racism in society. We will

screen two films, including one that was part of the initial programme, Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, and invite members of activist groups and new Belfast communities to talk about what cinema means in the fight against racism in Belfast.

Prosecution

Director Faraz Shariat, Germany, 113 minutes, 2026

The flaws and power structures of the German legal system are revealed to a young prosecutor after she becomes the victim of a racist attack. When Seyo Kim pursues her own case through the courts, she comes up against an impersonal bureaucratic machine that fails to acknowledge far right extremism. This is an impressive second feature from Faraz Shariat, depicting one young woman's gradual disillusionment with the world around her, while at the same time finding a new determination to achieve justice. Written by Claudia Schaefer and starring Chen Emilie Yan in a film that inspires both rage and compassion. UK Premiere.

Thursday 5 November, 7pm, The Avenue, £16

Ali: Fear Eats The Soul?

Director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Germany, 93 minutes, 1974

Rainer Werner Fassbinder's New German Cinema classic follows Emmi, a 60-year-old widow whose mundane life as a cleaning lady is unexpectedly transformed when she happens upon a bar frequented by immigrants and meets Ali, a young Moroccan man.

As their relationship grows, they build a simple and loving life together, yet their joy is dampened by the stigma and judgement they face from their neighbours, co-workers and Emmi's adult children, and as they become increasingly marginalised, these pressures begin to strain their relationship. *Fear Eats the Soul* remains a tender and painful depiction of love and societal prejudice, still tragically prescient more than 30 years after its release.

Friday 30 October, 6pm, Beanbag Cinema, £6/£4

How Can Cinema be a Tool for Anti-Racism?

In 2005, the Belfast Film Festival curated a series of screenings and commissioned a publication on racism in Belfast. This was in response to multiple media outlets describing the city as 'the most racist' in the world, and was an attempt to understand how cinema and the moving image can be intertwined with race and racism. 20 years have passed and the world is almost unrecognisable. The advent of social media and the blurred lines of news and fake news has created an environment in which racist pogroms can be incited through AI-generated posts. When the moving image is being

manipulated to manipulate others, how can cinema be used to combat this hatred? This panel discussion brings together activists, community workers and film scholars to discuss the question posed and how cinema might fill a vacuum, on a community level, where our own political system has failed.

Saturday 7 November, 3pm, Black Box, Pay What You Wish

Special Events

Thursday Night Quiz

Can you tell us how they filmed the big Cyclops guy in The Odyssey? Can you tell us how they filmed the little rock thing in Project Hail Mary? Can you tell us how they managed to film a Michael Jackson biopic in this day and age?? For their next trick, Best Boy Magazine & Normal Cinema Club return with yet another quiz dedicated to the most magical medium of all: the movies of course. These Quixotic quizmasters will ask the important questions and reveal the vape and mirrors behind cinema's most wonderful illusions of grandeur. Expect questions asking if Alana Haim was really the villain, if Anthony Bourdain would really have liked Tony, and the greatest question of all, what the hell is a miasma? It's Late Night Art, so percolate yourself in culture before perplexing yourself in quiz. Teams are capped at a maximum of 6. See [@bestboymag](#) and [@normalcinemaclub](#) for more info.

Thursday 5 November, 8pm, Black Box, £6 per admission.

Introduction to Super 8 Film (Black & White Reversal)

An introduction to all aspects of super 8 film shooting and developing for beginners.

The course will be divided into three parts: shooting as a group with a super8 camera, processing the film in the darkroom, and viewing the film at the end of the day.

This course is aimed at professional visual artists who would like to experiment with photo-chemical moving image in the context of their practice and looks at types of cameras and film stock, covers the essentials for film shooting in different conditions, using the developing equipment and chemistry, and preparing the film for projection and/or digital transfer. All materials are included, you can bring ideas for a 1 minute film and some props, costumes, or objects you would like to include in your film.

Previous experience with analog materials or darkroom photography is an advantage, but not a requirement. Helena Gouveia Monteiro is a visual artist and experimental filmmaker. At Fire Station Artists' Studios she manages the Media Studio and the recently launched Dubh Film Lab.

To book, please email boxoffice@belfastfilmfestival.org with a short description of your art practice and a link to your work.

Tutor: Helena Gouveia Monteiro

Participants: 6 max

Level: Beginners

Friday 6 November, 11am to 6pm, Beanbag Cinema, £80 all included

The “Wonderfully Interesting, Exciting and Dangerous World” of Harold Johnson

Presented by Irish Film Institute and Northern Ireland Screen

Harold Johnson (1910-1967) was a skilled amateur filmmaker, a Quaker, and a businessman. Heir to Belfast's Johnson Brothers business founded in Belfast in 1893, his family recently deposited his collection of over 150 films (30 hours) for preservation in the IFI Irish Film Archive. Shot between the 1930s and 1960s on 8mm and 16mm sound and silent film, the collection records family holidays, workers in the Ireland Coffee Factory, mountain climbing adventures, water skiing, motor sport, trips to Africa and the Holy Land, and Quaker gatherings in Dublin, Newtown School, Waterford and elsewhere. Meticulously edited, often playful, historically invaluable - these films are a joy to behold. This programme includes a series of short films which will be introduced by Harold's grandson, Alan Johnson and Sunniva O'Flynn (IFI). The silent films in the programme will be accompanied by pianist Morgan Cooke.

Thursday 29 October, 7pm, Black Box, Pay What You Wish

Mississippi Records Presents: A People's History Of Music

Presented by Moving On Music

It's a timely and compelling interweaving of people, place, past and present, and making music in troubling times. It's the story of powerful interests trying to control music and how people fight back. This event explores folk art champions and the exploitative nature of the mainstream music industry – all while drawing on Eric's comical and colourful personal experiences of the fascist creep. For seventeen years Mississippi Records operated with zero internet presence, released no digital music, and ran a cash only record store in Portland, Oregon. It became a true cult label - selling over one million records and helping (re)discover such

artists as Michael Hurley, Emahoy Tsegué-Maryam Guèbrou, and The Space Lady. Come along and keep on keepin' on.

Friday 6 November, 8pm, Black Box, £12/£8

Star or the Sea

Director James Wynne, Ireland, 76 minutes, 2026

In 1969, Star of the Sea from North Belfast were the best youth football team in Ireland. The team is made up of Protestant and Catholic players from the mixed local community of Rathcoole. By 1972, the team had been torn apart by The Troubles. Loyalist paramilitaries have taken over Rathcoole and Catholic families are forced out. Among them, the family of Star of the Sea's full back, Bobby Sands and his best friend Tommy O'Neill, Star's striker. Bobby joins the IRA, while two of his teammates, Michael and Terry join the loyalist UVF. The team's star centre back, Raymond McCord is scouted and has a spell at Manchester United but returns to his home club and a very different Belfast. He is the last Protestant player to leave the Star of the Sea club as Northern Ireland descends further into bloody chaos. Despite all of the horror, the surviving players maintain that the ethos of Star of the Sea rings true today and is the way forward for the next generation. This is the story of the talented players of Star of the Sea – who once represented everything that was great about Northern Ireland.

Thursday 5 November, 8pm, Odeon, Pay What You Wish

The Librarians

Director Kim A. Snyder, USA, 92 minutes, 2025

The Librarians, Kim A. Snyder's critically acclaimed documentary focuses on the culture war struggles of librarians in Texas, Louisiana, Florida, and other states, who have united to combat book banning demands from Moms for Liberty and other right-wing pressure groups in the United States. As one recent reviewer put it: "Incredibly principled and brave, the librarians talk about their vocation and standing up for the young people for whom libraries are a safe space where they can discover their identity in the pages of books" (The Guardian). The screening will be followed by a Q&A with the director, and some members of the production team.

Sunday 8 November, 12.30pm, Queens Film Theatre, Pay What You Wish

Performance Art Workshop with Rehearsal Space

Rehearsal Space is an emerging performance art collective based in Belfast. Through workshops and open sessions, they create a safe space for participants to explore performance. Everyone, artists and

non-artists alike, are welcome. Throughout this session, participants will be guided to move in response to archival footage from Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive. Numbers are limited, booking essential.

Tuesday 3 November, 4pm to 6pm, PS², Free

heavy, direct, quick

Visual Arts Exhibition

'heavy, direct, quick' draws together theory on power relations, labour, and dance, to consider the social, cultural and political structuring of bodies within the social environment.

Through film, sculpture and installation, normative patterns of behaviour and movement are questioned. Featuring Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive.

Artist: Emma Quin

Gallery opening times are Tuesday to Saturday, 12pm - 5pm.

The exhibition runs from Thursday 1 to Saturday 31 October.

Escape The Internet

Director Lucas Rizzotto, USA, 120 minutes, 2026

Escape The Internet is a new gaming genre that shatters the 4th wall and takes audience interaction to the next level. Experience wild interactive set pieces, connect with your fellow audience members and evade colourful monsters in this massive multiplayer experience. But move fast: you are infected with terminal brainrot and can be possessed by an algorithmic AI demon at any moment. Your future, and the future of the entire internet, is at stake. You can't stream it. You can't play it at home. You have to be here. Bring your friends. Bring your fully charged phone. Escape the Internet. Created by director Lucas Rizzotto and built with Pete Cybriwsky, presented by Belfast XR Festival in partnership with IDFA DocLab.

Monday 2 November, 7pm, Black Box, £15*

Tuesday 3 November, 2pm to 7pm, Black Box, £15*

*10% discount for group bookings of 4 or more

The Baby Factory is Closed

Director Deepa Mann-Kler

Northern Ireland, 20 minutes, 2026

What if the menopause wasn't an ending, but the beginning of a rebellion? The Baby Factory Is Closed is an award-winning, 20-minute interactive story that puts you inside the body of Zoraan, a woman navigating the menopause in a near-future world of A.I. surveillance, climate collapse and systemic control. This is not a quiet story about ageing. It is a funny, furious, surreal and unapologetically rebellious experience that turns the body itself into the battleground. Following sold-out shows in the USA, Canada and France, the work comes home to the Belfast XR Festival. VR (or menopausal) experience not required! You just need to be willing to enter Zoraan's world. Find out why The Baby Factory Is Closed... Directed by Belfast native, Deepa Mann-Kler with original music by Katie Richardson.

Monday 2 November, 10am to 4pm, Black Box, £7

Special Event 75th Anniversary Screening of Brian Desmond Hurst's Scrooge (A Christmas Carol)

Director Brian Desmond Hurst, 86 minutes, 1951

Born into a working-class family in east Belfast, Brian Desmond Hurst (1895–1986) rose to become one of Northern Ireland's greatest and most prolific film directors - a towering figure whose legacy we proudly celebrate today. He learned his craft alongside the legendary John Ford during the silent film era, going on to bridge the worlds of Hollywood's Golden Age, British commercial cinema, and Irish cultural storytelling with remarkable skill. In partnership with Northern Ireland Screen, we are delighted to mark the 75th Anniversary of Hurst's beloved 'A Christmas Carol' with this special screening. Featuring an unforgettable, era-defining performance by the legendary Alastair Sim as Scrooge, this cherished adaptation of Charles Dickens' timeless novella stands as the finest and most faithful version of the story ever brought to screen - a true jewel in Hurst's remarkable body of work. Crotchety Victorian businessman Ebenezer Scrooge (Alastair Sim) has no use for festivity, even at Christmas. After resentfully allowing timid clerk Bob Cratchit (Mervyn Johns) to have the holiday to spend with his loving wife and family, Scrooge is swept into a nightmare. The ghost of his late partner, Jacob Marley (Michael Hordern), appears, warning that Ebenezer will be visited by three more spirits who will show the coldhearted man the error of his parsimonious behavior.

Wednesday 9 December, 6pm, Odeon, Pay What You Wish

NI Independents

A Little Learning is a Dangerous Thing

Director Dominic Curran, 94 minutes

Whilst recovering from a car accident, Daniel (played by Funboys' Ryan Dylan) falls down an internet rabbit hole causing him to fixate on a local business man who is mismanaging a local lough. Although his contempt is well placed, the obsession threatens to overcome him. Director Dominic Curran has enormous fun playing with the blurred lines of truth and conspiracy in this timely debut. In an age where corporate greed has all but won, it's exciting to watch a film so unabashedly angry at the times we're living in, as well as the disaffected ennui that has brought us here. Driven by a piercing score and disorienting visuals, this film simulates the sensory overwhelm of life in the digital age, and is a portrait of a young mind unravelling in real time.

Monday 2 November, 8.30pm, Odeon, Pay What You Wish

Hollow Trees

Director Cathal Fitzpatrick, 84 minutes

In a post-apocalyptic world, a man and a young boy's fragile means of surviving faces a new threat in the form of creatures capable of mimicking human sound. Their bond is further challenged by the arrival of a newcomer and the possibility of a better future. We follow their journey as they abandon the familiar; Tom Kerrisk expertly plays a hardened survivor and carer to a young boy played by Louis Kirwan, who brings a sense of real vulnerability to the role. It is an ambitious and at times truly unnerving work of filmmaking from promising young director Cathal Fitzpatrick. Through deft cinematography, the familiar Irish landscape is transformed into an uncanny space as trust, hope and the strength of chosen family are put to the test.

Tuesday 3 November, 8.30pm, Odeon, Pay What You Wish

20 Cigarettes

Director Will McConnell, 66 minutes

In director Will McConnell's latest lo-fi experiment, the concept of the 'crime film' is transformed through a structural gambit. Each scene begins with a cigarette being lit and ends as it is stubbed out. Lasting as long as a humble pack of cigarettes does, we witness a story unfold through its liminal moments. With each drag, we learn about Jim and Vick. Against the backdrop of a vote for Irish unity, they get pulled into a life of crime. They soon learn however that the Bonnie and Clyde lifestyle is a hard one to maintain, and their relationship becomes as threatened as the national identity is. 20 Cigarettes is a refreshing take on the genre film in Northern Ireland, addressing and confronting the issues surrounding 'our wee country' rather than existing in a vacuum. The central relationship, as brought to life by Charlie Creighton and Anita Jurkovic, is nuanced and deeply felt. This is a bold and exciting film for the current moment.

Sunday 1 November, 6.30pm, Black Box, Pay What You Wish

Rozkvet

Director Thomas Pollock, 114 minutes

Set in occupied Czechoslovakia during WW2, Rozkvet shines a light on the lesser known story of women who stood as a backbone of the resistance against repressive powers. Featuring standout, often first-time performances from Romani actors, and co-created directly with people from the local Roma community, through community authorship this film creates space for the Roma community today and honours those who faced state violence in the past. The collaboration brings a real emotional depth to the film, shifting from harrowing scenes to moments of inspiration. This feature debut from director Thomas Pollock is a testament to survival, and a reminder that the war was lived and endured by people whose stories rarely make it into textbooks, but who carried entire communities through one of the darkest periods in European history.

Wednesday 4 November, 8.30pm, Odeon, Pay What You Wish

NI Independents

Mid-Length Programme

Sea of Glass

Director Mervyn Marshall, 23 mins

Julia, played with quiet precision by Rose Henderson, fills her days beach-combing, gathering treasures and adding them to her collection. However her mind is elsewhere as she stewes over her seemingly strained relationship with her granddaughter. Her efforts to connect via calls and voice messages go unanswered, time passes and she falls further into solitude. This film expertly punctuates this journey with the changing of seasons, filmed across eight months, director Mervyn Marshall allows the changes in weather and light to demonstrate Julia's isolation where she is seemingly suspended in place as the world changes around her.

Bubble

Director Patricia Downey, 24 mins

Filmed on location in Maghaberry Prison, Bubble focusses on three women who despite their differences in life experiences, find themselves incarcerated. Through the women's conversations we come to understand the difficulties of life both inside and outside prison walls. Inspired by the lived

experience of women within the criminal justice system, it is a timely reflection on issues of domestic violence, addiction and trauma. Director Patricia Downey's 25 years of experience can be felt in this excellently crafted and insular production which allows the performances to shine as they range from moments of humour to intense vulnerability.

Dark Disquiet

Director Sohaib Syed, 41 mins

A struggling mother, Abigail faces tragic consequences following a domestic row concerning her drinking, she is then sent on a voyage into mysterious realms in order to right the wrongs of her actions. Director Sohaib Syed artfully balances surreal moments with psychological tensions, grounding the film in themes of sacrifice, grief and relationship difficulties.

Wednesday 4 November, 6pm, Odeon, Pay What You Wish.