

the IRISH WORLD

£1.30

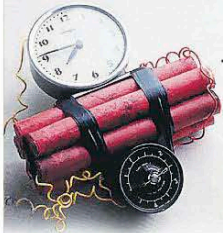
THE VOICE OF THE IRISH COMMUNITY IN BRITAIN

30 June 2012 • Issue No.1319

MONEY

TICKING TAX
TIMEBOMB FOR
HOLIDAY
HOME OWNERS

PAGE 12



MUSIC

SHELLEY
MARSDEN ON
THE INSIDE
STORY OF
GLASTONBURY

PAGES 28-29



NEWS

LONG
OVERDUE
HANDSHAKE
TO FINALLY
HAPPEN

PAGE 3



WIN "WINNER PLUS" TICKETS TO KEMPTON PARK'S IRISH NIGHT

PAGE
13

THE FESTIVAL TO END ALL FESTIVALS

Robin Mahoney tells **Shelley Marsden** about his gorgeously-shot 1993 documentary of England's best-loved and biggest summer festival...

Since 1971, over 5 million people have made the pilgrimage to one big field in Somerset. You'll come across everyone there, from local buskers with an audience of three to superstar performers lighting up the Pyramid stage with crazy lightshows and fireworks.

But the Glastonbury of today is very different to the festival that farmer Michael Eavis created, and one filmmaker captured it at the tail-end of a period of Woodstock-like innocence, before the big commercial guns came in and a whiff of money to be made filled the air.

Glastonbury The Movie (not to be confused with the 2006 rockumentary film directed by Julien Temple which details the history of the festival from 1970 to 2005) is Turner-esque, psychedelic and suggestive, Mike Leigh

called it 'a masterpiece'. The sun shone down on revellers that year, rather fortuitous for everyone involved considering how many times it's been a total mudbath since. One recent reviewer said 'They've captured the sunniest Glastonbury ever - it's a pity that since it's all been commercialised, God's decided to make it pour down on them!'

For those 'Glasto-heads' that are upset there's no festival this year, they can bathe in the hazy hedonism of Mahoney's movie. The London filmmaker, who has Irish roots, explains just why the year he took his cameras to Glastonbury was such a special one...

So, set the scene for Glastonbury circa 1993 for us...

We shot it in 1993 in a massive great balloon of enthusiasm. Myself and several other indie filmmakers all collaborated. We got given this opportunity to film it; at that time Glastonbury was this massive under-

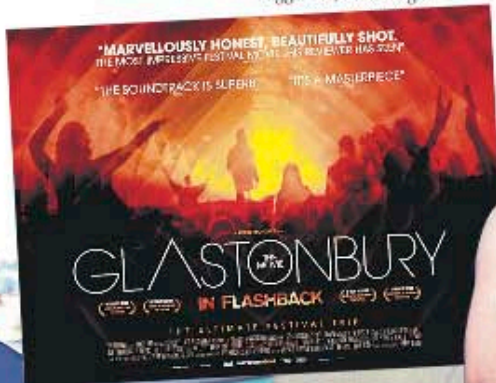
ground movement. To us, it represented a kind of groundswell of public, cultural activity which has now proved itself. It's right up there in the mainstream now. I mean, you'll have heard of Danny Boyle's Olympics opening ceremony - it's unbelievable. He's got live animals, Glastonbury Tor in there - it's like he got the idea off me. In fact, he did! I bumped into him at a cash-point last year and told him about the film, and he hadn't heard of it. Underneath it all, I think it was my idea... No but seriously, I recognised him as I work quite near where his studio is in London Fields.

Do you think it was a landmark year to be filming Glastonbury?

It was right at the very end of the original Glastonbury spirit. It was, I think, a fundamental sea-change moment in the history of the festival. What happened the next year was, the TV cameras were invited in and started broadcasting live from the festival. All the old-school aficionados, the real dyed-in-the wool Glastonbury folk said after we'd done it that we were really lucky to get in there before it all changed. That's kind of what kept me going with the film. I knew that we'd

It's about immersing the audience in the sense of being at the festival, what you'd call Pure Cinema

captured something special. Commercialism hadn't had a chance to get a foot-in yet. That year is kind of known to be one of the best of the 'old-school' Glastonburys, some say the best. Look through our Facebook page and you can see all the comments on the various photos we're putting up. It's stirring all these crazy memories.



Capturing a romantic moment amidst a sea of tents

It's a special festival but also a very special place...

Yes, it's when Glastonbury was full of all the magic and mysticism and weird spiritualism, and all the lay-line activities and vibes that you get off the land there. That part of the world is historically famous for being where King Arthur set up the Round Table... I think there's something in it. It's a feeling you get when you're there. The craziest coincidences happen, too. One thing that was very telling was about the font chosen for our end credits for the original film. The guys working on a poster for the new film were looking for a font, and without seeing the movie chose exactly the same font, Avant Garde. There are 150,000 fonts out there and they chose the same one. I mentioned to the guy that did the poster about it, and he nonchalantly shrugged and said, 'Ah, a bit of West Country magic for you, I'm from Glastonbury...'

Had you been to Glastonbury as a festival-goer before 1993?

I had, yeah. That was the clincher really, I knew how special it was. At that time, no one took cameras there. There's hardly any footage in existence before the TV cameras came in, in 1994. To most people that go there, it's not about seeing Beyonce on the main stage,



■ Worshipping the sun at the Stone Circle

it's not about the fact that Paul McCartney's there. It's about this massive connection that people feel when they're all huddled together, 150,000 of them in a field. A lot of people go there, thinking they're going to see all these big acts on the main stage, and end up watching a guy with a didgeridoo at the Stone Circle at 4 in the morning.

Talk me through the documentary then...

What was really important to me with this new ver-

sion of the film was to make it very different to the original. It's something that I'd really like to stress to people, that we've spent a year going through the material to do that. We shot on this format called CinemaScope. We really put ourselves on the line when we initially shot it; we wanted to make it like a Woodstock, paint these everyday lives and put them up large, using these massive canvases, trying to be Turner-esque about it. So we chose the very highest end cinema format that was

started going through it all again.

It was like my son when he gets his box of Lego and picks it all apart and makes a new spaceship or whatever, it's an engrossing thing. It's like a mine that's been closed, but still has a lot of rich material that has been lying undiscovered. We opened the mine and started chipping away at this stuff.

Have you succeeded in sucking people right into the heart of the Glasto experience?

From the feedback of initial screenings I think we have. I'm really happy with this film. A lot of people say they watch it and they're so buzzed up afterwards that they just want to go out and party. If we're lucky and there are enough people out there who see it, there might be enough of the magic of Glastonbury to find its way through the screen. We were very unobtrusive in the way we filmed it which is a part of that, I think, and very included in the experience of being at the festival - fans as well as filmmakers. We didn't try to force anything, we let it come to us so the film kind of made itself. I really want people to see it in the cinema, because there's so much detail; it's so crisp and sharp in places.

Do you have a magical moment from that '93 shoot?

One that grabbed me was the scene with the sunrise, I shot that. A lot of the crew had gone down to film the Stereo MCs with all the big cameras, and I didn't really want to go and be in the throng so I'd stayed behind to look after the kit - there were enough scallies knocking around! They all came back, really excited and tired, and they all crashed out. One of the crew came down to me at about 3.30, 4am and said, 'You've got to go to the Stone Circle!'

At this time I wasn't aware of what people did, but basically everybody hangs out up there, plays bongos, dances to pagan vibes and waits for and worships the sunrise, which finally tips the horizon. It's a real Glastonbury tradition, and it was just magic. There was such a rush coming off the people; it was an indescribable feeling of... whatever it is, whatever comes out of the ground, the air there.

Has Glastonbury still 'got it' though? It's so different event now, with big money involved.

I haven't been recently, I'm sort

of scared to go. Friends that have been recently say it's fantastic, it hasn't lost its touch. There are certain areas of the festival (West Holts, Shangri-La, Croissant Neuf) that have managed to retain something special. Last year, some guys I know were involved in the Spirit of '71 stage and they said it was great. Then there are the Green Fields... I'm a little worried that some aspects of that area might have turned into a bit of a museum. But the thing about it is, all those places when we shot our film, that were way ahead of their time, have all become part of mainstream culture, you know? Renewable resources, renewable energy. There are lots of people promoting quite odd, quasi-scientific ideas and many didn't make it into the film - they were maybe too wordy, too documentary - now they're common knowledge, even part of government policy. It was, at least, a very forward-thinking place. There are places like Green Gathering which do follow on in that tradition...

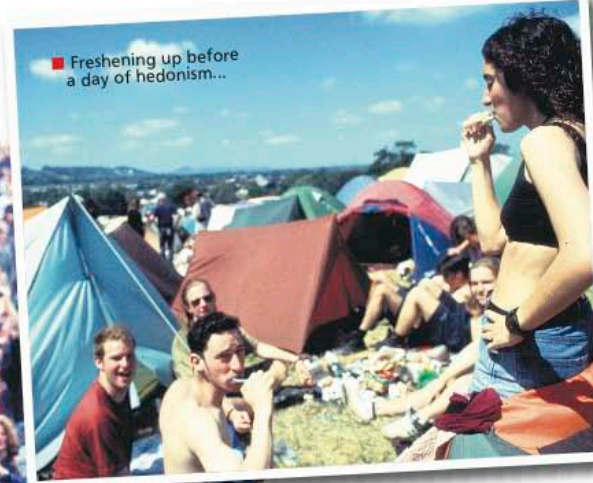
Are you heading to any festivals this summer?

Hopefully I'll bring the film to a few! Big Green Gathering have asked to screen it... I'd like to show it at every festival possible. Next year is the 20th anniversary of the shoot, so hopefully we'll be able to get it on the cinema field at Glastonbury next year, or even on one of the stages. I think it would be great to have sections of the film in between the acts on the main stage, to give people a flashback of what it was like - especially if it's raining. No matter what the weather, have a sunny experience!

This aside, what work are you proud of?

Well, I produced and edited a low-budget film called Sus a couple of years ago which was phenomenal. It's a three-hander based on a play by Barrie Keefe, who also wrote The Long Good Friday. He wrote this piece of theatre three weeks after Maggie Thatcher came into power, and it's basically a very powerful piece of drama about police intimidation. When the Stephen Lawrence ruling came out recently, the BBC put it out on BBC2 and it got record viewing figures. It struck people's imagination. It was a very moving film and I'm very proud to have been involved in it.

• Opening night premiere with Q&A and special guests, Alex Paterson (The Orb) & Stereo MCs is at Prince Charles, Leicester Square, London this Friday, June 29 at 8.30pm. For tickets see www.princecharlescinema.com. For all other screenings and more info, see www.glastonburythefilm.com.



■ Freshening up before a day of hedonism...



available at the time, and the lenses that we had were the best in the world - the same ones Stanley Kubrick used to film 2001: A Space Odyssey.

What did you change for the re-release?

Since we first put the film out there, people hadn't had the chance to see in that highest of high definition - when you look at the screen you can see everyone's faces in the mid-distance, what's written on people's t-shirts, and to me that's what it's all about.

It's about immersing the audience in the sense of being at the festival, what you'd call Pure Cinema. There's no real narrative, we don't have any talking heads, we don't use conventional documentary techniques.

Digital cinema technology has just caught up in the last four, five years. Five years ago it would have been totally out of the question to do what we did, to rescans all this definition footage, it would just have been prohibitively expensive, the reserve of big Hollywood budgets.

There was a point about three years ago when we said to ourselves yes, now's the time, we can do this. So we got all the material re-put into the digital domain and