

BALLYLIFFIN FILM FESTIVAL - PRESS RELEASE (FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE)

INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL PLANS RETURN TO DONEGAL in 2020

Disappear Here International Film Festival
September 25th-27th, Ballyliffin, Co Donegal.

COVID-19 has presented a challenge to the arts like never before, with events been pushed back into 2021 or shelved indefinitely. The Disappear Here Film Festival has become an increasingly popular feature on the festival circuit over the last three years and plans are still in place for its return to Ballyliffin in just 10 weeks' time. The 3-day event is pencilled in for 25th-27th September and once again the organisers plan to celebrate independent film-making from all corners of the country, and across the globe. Last year's highlights included the award-winning documentaries 'For Sama', and 'Gaza', and Irish homegrown comedy was well represented with the supernatural hit 'Extra Ordinary'. Leading casting director Maureen Hughes ran her very first Donegal casting workshop, plus she held a series of auditions to find a lead role in an upcoming feature film.

Festival Director Michael McLaughlin says that just as the event was beginning to find its place on the national circuit, the dire landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic has made holding in-person festivals a completely different proposition.

"Our options are to proceed, postpone or cancel, and at the moment a fantastic amount of work is going on in the background to make Disappear Here Film Festival 2020 a reality. We are still trying to figure out the changed environment that we must work within, and any solution will have to be considered within HSE guidelines in September. We have explored a number of options including bringing the entire event online, but issues around software, screening rights and our core festival audience profile makes that an unattractive option. Local film enthusiasts have always been the beating heart of Disappear Here and we want to do our very best to still give them an opportunity to have that collective audience experience we all love when watching great films in a darkened room. We will however facilitate a number of online masterclasses, to run concurrently, that will be of benefit to those interested in producing, directing or writing."

In order to adhere to the Irish government's rules on public gatherings in phase 4, the film festival will have to run at a significantly smaller capacity, and will have some fundamental changes in how the event is operated.

"It's now obvious that our big opening night film in a 250-person auditorium will have to be scaled back considerably" says Michael. "Our capacity will be cut by two thirds, and the maximum that we can now accommodate with the correct distancing in place is 75 persons per programme of films. In order to ensure the safety of our audience, volunteers, and venue staff we will have new rules on entering and exiting the screening room. Entry will be by on-line booking only, and our audience will be able to choose their own "PICTURE PODS" which seat between 1 and 4 persons, ensuring family members can still sit together. Sanitation will be a priority following each individual screening.

Finally, Michael believes that a first-class event can still be salvaged from the wreckage of COVID-19, and he is asking for people to come along and support the event in September.

“Obviously a big part of our festival was the industry networking, the post screening Q&A’s and the conversations in the bar afterwards. Even though these elements have been scaled back, let’s not forget the most compelling and rewarding aspect of any successful film festival, ...the work itself. This September we are going to give you a unique opportunity to see world premieres, exceptional short films, and thought-provoking documentaries right here in Donegal ...and now all we need in return is you our loyal audience, to come and join us.”

Full programme details will be released in early September, and films are still being accepted on the submission platform Filmfreeway via the website at www.disappearherefilmfest.com

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For additional details please contact Festival Director, Michael McLaughlin.
Mobile : 086 6071424
[Email: info@disappearherefilmfest.com](mailto:info@disappearherefilmfest.com)