

Chairman's Account of Würzburg International Film Fest 2007

For the 5th consecutive year St Kilians (www.stkilians.de) was very actively involved with the Würzburg International Film Fest, that ran from Jan 25th to Jan 28th. This is one of the largest cultural events in the city's calendar attracting over 13000 cinema viewers during its four days.

The littlest GAA Club in Unterfranken helps bring very high quality films, that have an Irish connection, to be screened for the local German audiences. Over the past years these films have included "If I should fall from grace – The Shane MacGowan story", 'Photos to send', 'Battle of the Bogside' and 'Mollys Way'. We have been fortunate in that the director and/or main protagonist has always been able to travel for the weekend and discuss their work with audiences after each screening.

This year we again acquired two outstanding Irish Documentaries: "No Go – The Free Derry Story" and "Rocky Road to Dublin". Guests from both films were present, Director Vinny Cunningham, Writer John Peto and Sound Engineer Billy Gallagher from the former and Director Peter Lennon from the latter. This was Vinny's second time appearing at this Fest, having already been here in 2005 with his award winning documentary "Battle of the Bogside". Both films dealt with different aspects of Irish political and cultural events during the late 1960ies.

This year was no exception in that friends travelled from various corners of Germany and using various modes of transport to be with us for the weekend. Tom arrives with great German timekeeping at the appointed time and thereafter with true West Clare fecklessness drove up (the wrong way!) a few one way streets to find a parking space! Aidan went the ride share method from Freiburg, managed to get stuck for a few hours traffic jam about Stuttgart with a couple of med students, but suspiciously enough there was very little complaining..!

Part and parcel of having a Fest at this time of year and in this part of Germany is cold weather. 2007 was not no exception with -17 Celcius recorded on Wednesday. Unfortunately the 15cm of accompanying snow only stayed with us for three days but it gave the 50 of so invited guests (Directors, actors, actresses) a flavour of what winter life can be in Northern Bavaria.

Both Vinny's and Peter's worked were screened twice over the weekend. They attracted audiences who were very engaged with the films and this became apparent with lively discussions after all screenings. It was a feature of the films this year, more than any of the previous four, that there were very animated Questions and Answers sessions. I feel it certainly had to do with the thought provoking and some times controversial material in both works. Peter, John, Vinny and co were also quite able to provide stimulating feedback for any and all points raised.

However it wasn't all work for the four days. On Saturday there was an evening of wine and fine dining in the local 1000 year old palace - called the 'Residence' - which segued conveniently to the Film Trash Disco. This is basically a normal Disco, but projected on the main walls are all the films that were entered for the Festival, but which were so unbelievably bad that only when viewed after 2am under intoxicating influences can a reason for their existence be assigned!!

Anyways to sum up 'they came, they conquered and they got back home to Derry and London'. I express my gratitude to both Peter, Vinny and Co and wish them the best with their works. Am still not sure if St Kilians will figure in the European sporting scene for this year but there is still a 'small' nucleus of local players that with the right encouragement might raise a flag in 2007!



Fest 2007 Left to right: Tom Curry, Vinny Cunningham, Margit Maier, John Peto, Owen McGuire



Fest 2007: Peter Lennon ("Rocky Road to Dublin") discusses his film with audience.