

CONOR O'TOOLE &
GARY SHERIDAN PRESENT



BICYCLE THIEVES

PUMPED UP

INTERNATIONAL PRESS KIT

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F I L M I N F O R M A T I O N

Title	<i>Bicycle Thieves: Pumped Up</i>
Genre	Comedy
Country of Prod.	Republic of Ireland
Director	Conor O'Toole
Screenplay	Conor O'Toole
Cast	Roxanna Nic Liam, Bryan Quinn, Meadhbh Haicéad, Aoife O'Connor
Run Time	90 minutes
Aspect Ratio	1.66
Resolution	1080x1152
Sound Format	Stereo
Language	English with English subtitles
Format	Digital, delivered on DCP

C O N T A C T

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FILM SYNOPSIS

Logline

Mags, a pizza delivery cyclist with anger issues, has her bike stolen, and resolves to hunt down the thief and get her bike back. Hopefully before she gets evicted. A magical realist action comedy set in modern Dublin.

Short Synopsis

Mags, a hot-headed pizza delivery cyclist who reckons herself to be entirely self-sufficient, is just about getting by during the property crisis in Dublin. When her bike is stolen and she loses her job, her eviction seems inevitable. With nowhere else to go, Mags must hunt down the thief who stole her bike and steal it right back. Mags must overcome her aversion to asking for help if she's going to succeed, because this is no ordinary thief she's hunting ... Part investigative thriller, part heist, and part magical-realist action comedy, *Bicycle Thieves: Pumped Up* is a wild ride from start to finish.

Long Synopsis

Mags, a hot-headed pizza delivery cyclist, is just about getting by during the property crisis in Dublin. She's struggling to keep her job due to her ferocious temper and keep up with the rent increases her middle class housemates can absorb comfortably. She doesn't trust others to be there for her so she reckons herself to be entirely self-sufficient. As a result she is often blind to the subtle ways her friends help her out.

She longs to join a collective of Couriers, the highest echelon of bicycle work in the city, but is rejected as she cannot 'merge onto the Astral Lane'. The Astral Lane is some sort of mysterious dimension only accessible to those who ride with a selfless heart.

When her bike is stolen and she loses her job, her eviction seems inevitable. With nowhere else to go, Mags must hunt down the thief who stole her bike and steal it right back.

After attending another futile flat viewing, Mags spots her handlebars on a bike cycling down the road and starts to unravel the identity of the thief.

Mags, with help from her flatmate Ailbhe draws the thief out and tails him, and then finds out he gives piano lessons. Mags suppresses her rage as best she can to attend one of these lessons and ultimately identifies him as Eric, an aging sellout punk who steals bikes to cut them up and make them into gick corporate art. He's essentially a bike serial killer.

To get her bike back Mags must attempt a daring heist on Eric's house, but she's just been booted out of her flat and has lost the trust of all her friends. Will she go it alone, or can she overcome her self image as a lone wolf and ask for help?

Will she be able to open up her heart and ride the Astral Lane? You'd hope so wouldn't you!

Part investigative thriller, part heist, and part magical-realist action comedy, *Bicycle Thieves: Pumped Up* is a wild ride from start to finish.

INTERVIEWS

Conor O'Toole, Director

Conor, you're an award winning stand up comedian, why did you make a film?

Stand up is such a transient art form, after doing it for ten years I felt I didn't have much to show for it other than my hazy memories of shows, both good and bad, a couple of clips that never really felt as funny to watch back as they did in the room, and of course, my award.

I got really into local bands around 2015 and only listened to Irish artists for about three years. The thing I noticed was regardless of how small their followings may have been, they were able to produce these records that were like, permanent art. You could hear them exactly how they intended at any time, which isn't really the way that stand up behaves.

So I decided a film would be a good way to convey my permanent comedy intent.

*Why have you called this film *Bicycle Thieves: Pumped Up*?*

My film, *Bicycle Thieves: Pumped Up*, in many ways echoes the 1948 Italian neo-realist classic *Bicycle Thieves*. They both follow a struggling working class character in an oppressive city whose bike gets stolen. But my version is funny and has magic in it.

What inspired you to make Bicycle Thieves: Pumped Up?

I've cycled all my life, and I've had a number of bikes stolen over the years. I've always aspired to do what the main character, Mags, does in the film, which is to find her stolen bike and attempt to steal it back. But I never have because it's hard. Actually the last bike I had stolen was taken from Thomas Street, where Mags's bike gets stolen in the movie. I didn't even plan that, it's just kind of a coincidence.

What films did you take inspiration from in the writing of the picture?

Oh I took ideas from a bunch of places. For ages I thought it was a rip off of Steven Soderberg's *Ocean's 11*. I took the magical realist elements from Miranda July's *The Future* and mixed them with the goofy courier-vision stuff from *Premium Rush*. The Lonely Island movie *Hot Rod* was also a tonal touch stone. After I wrote it I realised it was basically just *Bicycle Thieves* though.

The film was made on a micro-budget, can you explain how you did that?

Long story short, I wrote it to be cheap and I cashed in about a decades worth of favours. I didn't pay for any locations, just shooting in friends' houses or on the street. We shot the film in 20 days, mostly handheld with zoom lenses, for maximum speed. Setting up the tripod and changing lenses was just taking too long for the amount of time we had. On our most efficient day we shot something like 16 pages. On a film with a proper budget you'd expect to get more like four or five pages done a day. That was the day with Owen Colgan, his entire role was shot in one day.

What's the story with casting?

Once the script was written I realised the only person for the role was Roxanna Nic Liam, probably best known for playing Erica on *Fair City*. I needed a great actor with comedy chops who knew what cycling in Dublin was like, and could believably shout at people in the street. There was only really one choice. I knew Roxanna from the grimey Dublin comedy scene of ten years ago when she was in a sketch troupe and I was a promising young stand up comedian. She wisely got out and I am now an old, disappointing stand up comedian.

The cast is almost sixty strong and about a third of them are comics I know from the stand up scene. If you follow Irish comedy at all there will be at least a few heads you recognise in there, from Alison Spittle and Tony Cantwell to Owen Colgan, Tara Flynn and Maeve Higgins. I think the film features pretty much everyone I know who doesn't have a proper job and is free in the afternoon.

But what is it about, really?

Well, I had this millennial pizza girl on the brink of homelessness whose bike gets robbed. And so I thought it was about anger, and learning to control your anger. But then I realised I didn't really want Mags to stop being angry at the end. I think she's right to be angry! So instead of treating the symptoms of her problems, I thought it best to treat the source. Which meant Mags needed to learn the value of community action and stop thinking there's something noble about self-reliance. Also, we had to solve the Dublin housing crisis by the end of the film, which thankfully we were able to do.

What are you working on next?

I'm working on a film called *Potluck* which is kind of like a mashup of *Run Lola Run* and *My Dinner with André*. I'm also sketching out plans for a neolithic bureaucratic drama about the construction of a court cairn. It's called *Monument*.

CAST & CHARACTERS

Roxanna Nic Liam as 'Mags'

Mags is a hot headed bicycle delivery cyclist from Dublin. With no family and few friends she is determined to look after herself, even as the financial pressures of Dublin pile up on top of her. When her bike is stolen her whole life comes crashing down around her, and she vows to find her bike and get it back.

Roxanna Nic Liam is best known for her work on *Fair City* and *Love/Hate*. Nic Liam's work in theatre includes *Liola* at The National Theatre, *The Plough And The Stars* and *The Passing At The Abbey*, Dublin; *Bas Tongue*, *Paper Boy And Friends*, *THEATREclub Sole Your Clock Radio*, *What The F&*k You Gonna Do About It?*, *This Is Still Life*, *Daily Bread* and *The Cripple Of Inishmaan* for Project Arts; *Rough* for THEATREclub; *Perve* and *A Midsummer Nights Dream* for Peacock; *Complexity* for The Complex; and *City Breaks* at the Dublin Fringe Festival. TV includes *Love/Hate III* and *Raw IV* and films include, *Out Of Here*, *Homemade*, *Two Hearts*, *Agnes Brown* and *The General*.

CAST & CHARACTERS

Bryan Quinn as 'Eric'

Eric is the villain of the story, he steals bike to cut them up and make them into tacky sculptures. He used to be one of Bono's mates and still teaches piano as it's a handy way to get paid to exert power over people. He owns his own home and is comfortable in life in a way that Mags is not.

Bryan Quinn is an actor, presenter, director and musician based in Ireland. He is best known for starring in and co-directing (with Bobby McGlynn) The Rubberbandits darkly comic *Dad's Best Friend* - this music video is featured in *Trainspotting T2*. Recent work includes Sir Richard in *The Professor and The Madman*, starring Mel Gibson and Sean Penn and directed by Farhad Safinia. A graduate of Jacques Lecoq, École Internationale de Mime et Mouvement, Paris. Previous work includes *Game of Thrones* (HBO), the satirical *Irish Pictorial Weekly* - including the 1916 Special on RTÉ. He has also written and starred in several plays, including *Saddled*, a comedy featuring live bicycle repair, co-written with and from an idea by Edinburgh winning stand up comedian David O'Doherty.

CAST & CHARACTERS

Meadhbh Haicéid as 'Ailbhe'

Ailbhe is Mags' best friend and housemate and in many ways her opposite. She is calm and methodical, with a steady job and relative security. She is both supportive and conflict-averse, so despite often helping Mags she never goes looking for thanks, knowing it would probably not be forthcoming. But as Mags gets desperate in the hunt for her bike, she pushes Ailbhe's friendship further and further.

Meadhbh's work in performance includes playwriting, directing, story-telling and stand-up comedy. She is a founding member of Waterdonkey Theatre Company, with whom she has directed many devised productions including *Home* (Collaborations, 2015) and the 12-hour *Happening* (Dublin Fringe Festival, 2011; Cork Solstice, 2011) which both involved live improvisation within a rule-based structure. Her play *A Different Animal*, produced by Wildebeest, was nominated for the Spirit of the Fringe Award for Writing at Limerick Unfringed (2011). In 2015, Meadhbh presented the experiment in collective spontaneity *Chaos (or 'It Loves to Happen')* at THE THEATRE MACHINE TURNS YOU ON 4 – THE JAM SESSIONS and Quarter Block Party, Cork. Previous solo work also includes one-woman show *MADONNA* which Meadhbh wrote and performed (Dublin Fringe Festival 2013; THEATRE MACHINE Vol. 3, 2013; W.I.P Cork Solstice, 2012).

CAST & CHARACTERS

Owen Colgan as 'Bob'

Bob is a low level bike thief who Mags comes to realise is in a more similar situation to her than she initially realised. She could be in his situation very quickly with a couple bad breaks. Despite his situation he is kindhearted and honest. His character was in part inspired by videos of American local news stations doing stings on lowly bike thieves, all of whom were immensely sympathetic.

Owen Colgan is a comedian and comedy actor best known for the role of Buzz McDonnell in the show *Hardy Bucks*. He starred in four seasons of the show on Ireland's national broadcaster RTÉ and also *The Hardy Bucks Movie* which media coined "the Irish Hangover" and was produced by Universal Studios.

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

Conor O'Toole — Writer, Director & Producer

Conor O'Toole is a film-maker and comedian from Dublin. *Bicycle Thieves: Pumped Up* is his debut feature as a director. He photographed *The Middle Finger* (2016) which was distributed by Troma. From 2013 to 2019 O'Toole ran the Firehouse Film Contest, a monthly short film showcase that has been described as “the closest thing Ireland has ever had to a functioning comedy department.”¹ In 2017 O'Toole won the Dublin Fringe's Spirit of Wit award, for his interactive comedy show *Deadline!*. It received five stars from *Irish Times* theatre critic Peter Crawley.

Eoghan O'Brien — Director of Photography

This is the first feature for Director of Photography Eoghan O'Brien who had previously shot award-winning shorts *TV Time Loop* (2019), *The Last Viking: The Tale of Fisk og and the Pommfritter* (2016), *The Five Minute Variety Hour* (2018), and others. He also plays drums in the bands No Monster Club and Autre Monde.

Gary Sheridan — Editor & Producer

Gary Sheridan is an editor, producer and director whose previous credits include editing features *How to be Happy* (2013) and *Justice for One* (2018) as well as the award-winning short *TV Time Loop* (2019). *Bicycle Thieves: Pumped Up* is his first feature as a producer.

Gillian Fitzpatrick — Production Designer

Gillian Fitzpatrick is a multi-media artist, working in sculpture, installation, film, and animation. Her work is heavily influenced by Space Age designs and ideas, and the early years of Space exploration, both in terms of the actual historical events and the wider social and cultural impact.

PRODUCTION TRIVIA

Conor O'Toole wrote the film on his phone while walking around Mountjoy Square to get his tiny daughter to sleep in a sling. Both his daughter and Mountjoy Square feature in the film.

The majority of the indoor locations in the film had their tenants evicted or closed down soon after filming wrapped due to the housing crisis.

Mags' bike was bought from a guy in Ballybough for €25.

Production took place over 20 days from August to November 2018, with one day of pickups in January 2020.

The eviction plotline was in part inspired by the director's landlord sending the fire officer around in an attempt to break his lease during pre-production.

All sixteen pages of Owen Colgan's scenes were shot in one day.

One of the crew members, Ian Lynam, had his bike stolen during production.

Producer Gary Sheridan now owns Eric's racer, Donnacha O'Brien who plays Richy now owns the petrol 'deathbike', and Aoife O'Connor who plays Cat owns Mags' bike. Roxanna Nic Liam, Meadhbh Haicéid, and Conor O'Toole's bikes also feature in the film.

O'Toole produced the film despite having no funding and while his daughter was six months old as he feared too many of his collaborators would have emigrated if he waited to make it further down the line. He himself emigrated to Glasgow in July 2019.

Almost the entire crew of the film appear on screen at some point or other.

Director Conor O'Toole had a bike stolen from Thomas Street, the same street Mags has her bike stolen from in the film.

There were no closed streets or permits sought on the production.

C R E W

Director	Conor O'Toole
Writer	Conor O'Toole
Producers	Conor O'Toole & Gary Sheridan
Director of Photography	Eoghan O'Brien
Editor	Gary Sheridan
Sound Recordist	Gary Sheridan
Production Designer	Gillian Fitzpatrick
Production Co-Ordinator	Karl Ussher
Music	Rachel Ní Chuinn
VFX Supervisor	Diarmuid O'Brien
ADR Engineer	Paul Synnott
Stills Photographer	Yan Bourke
Costume Designer	Thomas O'Keeffe
Alarm Consultant	Donal Moran
Piano Lesson Consultant	Cal Folger Day
Costume Consultant	Renata Pekowska
Catering	Mags O'Brien
Production Assistants	Ian Lynam Gary Kealy Donal Moran Conor Luke Barry Séamus Hanly

CAST

Mags the Hero	Roxanna Nic Liam
Ailbhe the Housemate	Meadhbh Haicéid
Richy the Motorist	Donnacha O'Brien
Bev the Boss	Alison Spittle
Eric the Thief	Bryan Quinn
A magic Humpback Whale	Maeve Higgins
Mags' Ma	Aoife Dooley
Bad Customer	Tony Cantwell
Bob the Thief	Owen Colgan
A Guard	Stephen Colfer
Gareth the Alarmsmith	Gary Sheridan
King Fartman	Eoghan O'Brien
Head Courier	Rachel Ní Chuinn
Courier Racer	Hilbert Celestino
Cat the Housemate	Aoife O'Connor
The Landlord	Tara Flynn
The Minister for Housing	Séamus Hanly
Support Group Leader	Simon Mulholland
Support Group Attendees	John Morton
	Pauline Shanahan
	Julie Jay