

The Ban **NI Screen Film Freeway**

Roisin Agnew - Director and Producer:

Roisin Agnew is an Italian-Irish filmmaker and PhD student based in London.

She's recently worked as a games writer for PlayStation developing a new IP. She's in development with her first feature film with Tailored Films and XYZ, currently attached as writer-director. She's previously written scripts for shorts produced by Screen Ireland and NI Screen.

She's an Associate Lecturer at The London Film School on the Screenwriting and Filmmaking MAs and a PhD student at the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths University where she's researching data centres and extractivism in the Irish terrain.

She's worked as an assistant producer on Faction Films' Grierson Award-nominated film *The Plan* (2018). She's worked as an assistant producer for Irish TV, where she worked in current affairs, and prior to that she worked as a breaking news sub-editor at The Irish Times.

Roisin's fiction has appeared in MAP Journal and The Dublin Review. She's been published by The Guardian, The Irish Times, and more.

She curates a bimonthly film programme, Storming Heaven, at Close Up film centre assembled around filmmaking as a practice of radical community building.

She's won the Next Generation Artist Award from Arts Council Ireland.

Sam Howard - Producer:

Sam works as a producer and director for Belfast-based production company, Erica Starling. Most recently, he worked as assistant producer on feature documentary *Lyra* that in 2023 won a Grierson Award, the Tim Hetherington Award at Sheffield Doc Fest, and a Prix d'Europe Award.

Sam is currently working as assistant producer on an upcoming feature documentary about a well-known 1990s Irish boy-band, produced by SONY Entertainment.

His short film, *Ireland's Last Matchmaker*, funded by BFI and NI Screen, won Best Short Documentary at Docs Ireland 2022.

Sam has many years' experience working as a researcher and camera assistant for broadcasters including Channel 4, BBC 2, BBC 3 and BBC 4.

Alison Millar - Producer:

Alison is one of the UK and Ireland's most respected documentary film-makers. She's a BAFTA, Grierson, Sheffield Doc Festival, Prix d'Europe, IFTA, and Prix Italia winner with a reputation for making emotionally compelling films.

Trained at the National Film and Television School, Alison went on to make observational documentaries for BBC1, BBC2 and Channel 4 with many of the UK's best-known independent companies, as well as working in-house for the BBC Documentary Department.

She runs Belfast-based Erica Starling Productions.

The Ban

Synopsis:

The Ban looks at a mostly forgotten episode in British history that led to the strange practice of using actors to dub those deemed sympathetic to the IRA at the height of The Troubles in Northern Ireland. Immortalised by Chris Morris's notorious Day Today sketch, the Broadcast Ban implemented by Margaret Thatcher between 1988 and 1994 saw the voices of all those associated with Irish republicanism and its political party, Sinn Fein, removed from the airwaves.

Via unseen archive footage and present-day interviews with key figures such as Gerry Adams, Danny Morrison, Stephen Rea, and the voice actors that worked for the BBC, The Ban looks at the British government's policy of using the threat of 'terrorism' to legally justify censorship and the removal of dissenting voices from public life.

Taking this historic case as its starting point, The Ban hints at the legacy of these methods in the present, where the tools of cinema continue to be used complicitly by the British state and media to shape public perception of unfolding conflicts like the one in Gaza.

Director's Statement:

It's 30 years since the IRA ceasefire that led to the lifting of the Broadcasting Ban and the beginning of the peace process, and the right time to revisit this strange moment in Northern Irish history to understand its legacy today. The political fall-out from Brexit has revealed how crucial and yet how little understood Northern Ireland remains. While all of this has happened in the context of the recent ascent of Irish republicanism and Sinn Fein on either side of the border, it's important to revisit the unlikely history from which this popularity has emerged.

My interest in the bans came from my own cross-border background. We have been lucky in the support afforded us by the NI Screen Archives who were incredible champions of the project and gave us unfettered access and support. We were further more lucky in landing some of the defining figures of The Troubles such as Gerry Adams, Eamon McCann, Dennis Murray, Danny Morrison and more, who don't give public interviews and who are all in their seventies and eighties now. RA.

Commissioned by Northern Ireland Screen Film Archive.

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