

SONG OF GRANITE



Directed by: Pat Collins

Written by: Pat Collins, Eoghan Mac Giolla Bhríde, Sharon Whooley

Starring: Macdara Ó Fatharta, Mícheál Ó Confhaola, Jaren Cerf, Pól Ó Ceannabháin, Colm Seoighe

Executive Producers: Philip King, Tina Moran, Keith Potter

Producers: Alan Maher, Jessie Fisk, Martin Paul-Hus

Cinematographer: Richard Kendrick

Editors: Tadhg O'Sullivan

Sound Designer: Sylvain Bellemare

Music: Delphine Measroch

Running Time: 104 minutes

Rating: Not yet rated

Language: Irish and English with English Subtitles

2017 SXSW – 24 Beats Per Second Narrative Feature section *World Premiere*****

<http://schedule.sxsw.com/2017/events/FS21501>

Sunday, March 12th at 11:45am – Alamo Lamar (1120 S Lamar Blvd)

Tuesday, March 14th at 4:45pm – Alamo Ritz (320 East 6th Street)

Saturday, March 18th at 12:15pm – Alamo Lamar

To Download Materials:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ar6w2qym0k4eog/AABJye6OAOQ-wPMMN0uablBSAa?dl=0>

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SYNOPSIS

"SONG OF GRANITE" revolves around the life of the great traditional Irish singer, Joe Heaney. The harsh landscape combined with the myths, fables and songs of his Connemara childhood helped shape this complex and fascinating character. Enigmatic and complex, Heaney's devotion to his art came at a huge personal cost.

Q&A WITH DIRECTOR PAT COLLINS

Q) How did you get involved in the project?

I began working on an outline for "Song of Granite" in 2011 with my co-writers Sharon Whooley and Eoghan Mac Giolla Bhríde. But I first heard a recording of Joe Heaney singing on the radio around 1991 and I bought a cassette tape of one his albums and it grew from there. I've loved his singing ever since. He died in 1984 but I had never heard of him before until that I heard him on the radio.

Q) What was the casting process like to find people who could sing at the level you needed?

The casting was done over a three-year period but we didn't make the final decision until a few months before filming started. It was important for me that the actor playing Joe in the 1960s would be real singer. I felt that the experience of witnessing the singer sing 'for real' was vital to the film. It would be impossible for an actor to mime this. And it couldn't possibly have the power of someone actually singing to camera. We had three actors playing Joe Heaney at different stages of his life, and Míchéal Ó Confaola, the singer who plays Joe in his middle years, was someone I was thinking about casting for a few years. I heard him singing at concerts and he is an incredible performer. A real raw talent, who sings from the heart and with great intensity. There is something mesmerizing about this style of singing.

Q) Why did you decide to film in black & white?

I always thought of it as black and white film. I wanted Song of granite to echo the period when the film is set, cinematically, especially for the early scenes set in the 1930s and the 1960s. I felt it needed to feel like the cinema from that period.

Q) For anyone not familiar with Joe Heaney, what should they know about him before seeing the film? And what does he mean to Irish culture and traditional Irish music?

It was said of Carna in Connemara, Joe's home place that "the depth and richness of the folklore in this one parish were without equal in Western Europe". Heaney was completely immersed in that culture. Singing and storytelling was central to his life. The term for his style of singing is an Irish expression 'sean nós'. Joe Heaney was a sean nós singer and that means 'old style'. And Joe Heaney is perhaps the greatest exponent of that style.

Lillis O'Laoire a singer and scholar wrote that Heaney "is the single most important individual artist to have emerged from the Gaelic community in the twentieth century.' Heaney began singing from within an ancient tradition and end up performing with John Cage. That's quite a journey. I think he was a true artist and I feel as if he made a pact to honor the artistic tradition he emerged from.

Q) What did you learn, if anything, about Joe after shooting the film that you didn't already know?

Heaney's story is one of single-minded dedication to his art but he was complex and enigmatic, charismatic and elusive. The more I listened to him and the more I spoke to people who knew him there was a sense that he actually became more elusive. There have been two books written about him, a documentary made and now we've made a feature film but still he is still a puzzle. That's what is so compelling about him.

Q) Where did you uncover all of the archival footage used in the film?

The main archive is from a film called "Impressions of Exile," made by a great British filmmaker called Philip Donnellan. He made a film around the Irish community in Britain in the 60s. It's a beautiful film and it featured Joe Heaney. We also used archive of Joe Heaney in New York around 1969. That was made for RTÉ, the public service broadcaster in Ireland. And there was footage of his performance at the Newport Folk Festival in 1966. The archive was an important part of the film for me and we were familiar with most of the archive even before we put pen to paper. Those moments in the film where the archive is, creates a real energy in the film.

Q) Where does this film fit within the long tradition of Irish song/music films over the last 25 years?

Music and singing is still very important in Ireland and there have been terrific documentaries made about music over the years. But this style of singing hasn't been too well represented. It's usually there as decoration. But we were wanted to make the song and the singing the central part of the film. It was important that we could experience the singers as if we were there in the room with them. The singing is hypnotic and meditative and feels as if it is emerging from the earth.

I don't consider "Song of Granite" a biopic. Roger Ebert said of biopics that "Most biopics shape the enigmatic events of life into the requirements of fiction, so that most lives seem the same, and only the professions and the time periods change". And I think that's true. We wanted to avoid that. We wanted the song to be a central force of the film, to make it as much about the song and the act of singing as about the singer.

Q) What does it mean to you to have the film's world premiere at SXSW?

Having the premiere at SXSW is fantastic given the strong musical connection. I've never been and I'm really looking forward to it. We're in good company with directors like Terence Malick. Though I'm sure he won't be present! It's exciting and I hope SXSW can help in launching our film into the world.

ABOUT THE CAST



Colm Seoighe (Young Joe Heaney)

Colm became an internet sensation in Ireland at just age 4 performing traditional Irish songs. He has since had numerous appearances on national television competing in various traditional Irish singing and dancing events. *SONG OF GRANITE* is Colm's acting debut, since completing production Colm's acting career has taken off and he has just wrapped on Lance Daly's much anticipated film *BLACK 47*.



Mícheál Ó Confhaola (Joe Heaney, 40s)

Considered a local hero in his home place of Connemara, Mícheál has become one of Ireland's highly regarded traditional Sean Nós Singers. In 2013 Mícheál won the Corn Uí Riada, Ireland's biggest Sean nós singing competition. *SONG OF GRANITE* is Mícheál's acting debut.



Macdara Ó Fátharta (Joe Heaney, 60s)

Macdara Ó Fátharta has been a regular member of the cast of popular Irish Drama *Ros na Run* since its first season in 1996. Prior to that he had spent two years with an acting school with the Abbey Theatre and subsequently twenty years with the Abbey from 1972-1996, while there he acted in plays by John B. Keane, Brian Friel, Tom Murphy, Shakespeare, and Chekov. He has over ten television productions to his credit, and parts in films such as *Far and Away*, *The Blackwater Lightship*, and the first ever Irish language feature film *Poitín*.



Jaren Cerf (Rosie)

Jaren Cerf is a recording artist and songwriter most recognized for her work in the trance music with artists like Armin van Buuren, Dash Berlin, and Cerf, Mitiska & Jaren. *SONG OF GRANITE* was not Jaren's first screen appearance, having starred in Shaun Ryan Savard's *MUSTANG SALLY: THE FIRE MENACE* (2014) and in 2015 Jaren portrayed Joni Mitchell and Celine Dion in Annerin's production of *OH CANADA, WHAT A FEELING*. As well as music and acting Jaren also writes books and screen plays.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS



Pat Collins (Director)

Pat Collins has been making films since 1998 and has directed over 30 films – feature films, documentaries and short experimental works. He has made documentaries on the writers Michael Hartnett, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, John McGahern and he co-directed a documentary on Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami.

He completed the feature film ‘Silence’ in 2012 which had its international premiere at the London Film Festival and was distributed by Element Films in Ireland and New Wave Films. Song of Granite is his second drama feature film.

Sharon Whooley (co-writer)

Song of Granite is Sharon Whooley’s second film with Pat Collins and Eoghan Mac Giolla Bhríde as they collaborated in 2012 on the feature film Silence. She has been co-director of Harvest Films since 2001 and she has also directed several short experimental film works which have screened in Ireland and internationally.

Eoghan Mac Giolla Bhríde (co-writer)

Eoghan Mac Giolla Bhríde is an Irish language writer from Donegal. He mainly writes short fiction and screenplays. In 2013 he starred in the award winning Silence which he co-wrote with the director Pat Collins and with Sharon Whooley. Eoghan is currently working on his third collection of short stories.

Richard Kendrick (cinematographer)

Richard has over twenty years’ experience in film and television. And has photographed 15 IFTA nominated documentary’s, eight winners and has been nominated twice in the cinematography category for ‘Two for the road’ and ‘In Good Hands’. In recent years he has have been focusing on Drama & Commercials. In 2016 he directed the photography of three feature films including SONG OF GRANITE, as well as THE LODGERS (Brian O’Malley, Tailored Films) and THE DELINQUENT SEASON (Mark O’Rowe, Parallel Films - starring Cillian Murphy) Currently he is shooting a BBC/RTE Drama for Deadpan Films.

Marcie Films

Marcie Films (formerly ROADS Entertainment) is a narrative and documentary film production company run by producers Alan Maher and Jessie Fisk. Current productions include SONG OF GRANITE, to be distributed by Soda Pictures in Autumn 2017 and premiering at SXSW Film Festival in March.

Past projects include; Maya Zinshtein’s FOREVER PURE (2016), which premiered at Toronto International Film Festival in 2016; Claire Dix’s WE ARE MOVING: MEMORIES OF MISS MORIARTY which premiered at Audi Dublin International Film Festival in 2016; Anthony

Wonke's BEING AP (2015), which premiered at Toronto International Film Festival in 2015 and was distributed theatrically by eOne; and Daisy Asquith's AFTER THE DANCE, which screened on BBC4 in March 2015.

Prior to setting up Marcie Films/ROADS Entertainment, Alan Maher was a Senior Executive at the Irish Film Board for six years and was responsible for more than fifty feature films and documentaries including GOOD VIBRATIONS, GRABBERS, LAST HIJACK, KNUCKLE, MEA MAXIMA CULPA, THE SUMMIT, KELLY + VICTOR, DREAMS OF A LIFE, HIS & HERS and WAKE WOOD. Alan also developed and co-produced the award-winning horror film CITADEL, directed by Ciarán Foy.

Jessie Fisk's previous credits include the BAFTA-nominated short film THE PARTY, directed by Andrea Harkin.