



2017 / 93 MINUTES / IRELAND / ENGLISH / PRISON THRILLER

U.S. DISTRIBUTION

Lightyear Entertainment - Arnie Holland - (818) 855-1318 - arnie@lightyear.com

PUBLICITY

GS Entertainment Marketing Group - Steven Zeller - (323) 860-0270 - stevenzeller@gsemg.com

BOOKING

Avatar Films - Jason Leaf - (646) 423-8236 - jason@avatarfilms.com



LOGLINE

Based on the true story of the 1983 mass break-out of 38 prisoners from the HMP Maze high security prison, *Maze* is a gripping prison break film that follows the relationship between two men on opposite sides of the prison bars.

SYNOPSIS

Maze charts how inmate Larry Marley, played by Tom Vaughan-Lawlor (*Love/Hate*, *Avengers: Infinity War*), becomes chief architect of the largest prison escape in Europe since World War II – an escape which he plans but does not go on himself. Up against him is the most state-of-the-art and secure prison in the whole of Europe – a prison within a prison. While scheming his way towards pulling off this feat, Larry comes into close contact with prison warder Gordon Close, played by Barry Ward (*Jimmy's Hall*).

Larry and Gordon's complex journey begins with cautious, chess-like moves. Initially, Gordon holds all the power in their relationship and rejects all of Larry's attempts at establishing a friendship between them. Bit by bit, Larry wears down Gordon's defenses, maneuvering himself into a position of trust. As each man begins to engage with the other as an equal, the barrier between prisoner and warder has been broken. During all this time, however, Larry has been scheming behind Gordon's back, gleaning as much information as he can and working with other prisoners in a separate block, trying to engineer their escape. When the escape finally takes place, thirty-eight prisoners reach the main gate and nineteen get away. Gordon is stunned by Larry's betrayal and his own foolishness.

Still, both of them have been irrevocably changed by their interaction. Their relationship represents the beginning of dialogue between the two sides, the first green shoots of the eventual peace process. As both the epicenter of an enduring conflict and the source of its eventual resolution, the story of *Maze* is the story of the troubles themselves.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I began my writing and directing career making award winning short films about characters caught up in the Northern Ireland conflict (*After '68* and *'81*), and I am excited about returning to this theme from a new perspective twenty years on. The 1983 Maze prison escape is one of the few true stories from that conflict which has the ability to weave its myriad threads together to give us the big picture.

Based on real events, *Maze* focuses on a particularly unique time in the history of the Northern Irish conflict. After the devastation of the hunger strikes, it was a time of much reflection and change within both the Republican and Loyalist movements.

The key relationship at the heart of our film is between Larry Marley, prisoner and escape planner, and Gordon Close, prison warden. Larry was, in real life, one of the main planners of the escape. Gordon is fictional, but much of his story is adapted from real events. Initially, Larry and Gordon are just enemies, born on opposite sides of Northern Ireland's political divide, and they have as little human contact with each other as possible. However, when Larry sees something in Gordon that makes him think he could be useful for his escape plan, a slow seduction begins.

The connection between the film's two lead characters is based, from the outset, on cold deception, manipulation and betrayal, making the relationship that eventually forms all the stronger. In my previous work on Northern Ireland, I also used a dual perspective approach in order to delve deeper into the causes of the conflict.

When we meet Larry Marley, it is at the very beginning of the Republican movement's journey towards politics. Without being anachronistic, *Maze* emphasizes hope for the future through



Larry's desire to create a non-violent future for his children. The storyline of Larry persuading his son not to join the IRA is based on fact. Even though prisoner Larry and warden Gordon's relationship is founded on deception, the film shows that they can engage with each other and affect each other, despite being political enemies. This kind of tentative, wary engagement mirrors how all sides eventually engaged with each other in the Good Friday peace talks.

Showing how these two enemies can form even a fleeting relationship despite history and their own convictions is, for me, a terrific and unexpected way to explore the human condition. I love that our story operates on many levels simultaneously, gradually and subtly pointing to how the conflict will eventually be resolved in the years ahead, while at the same time, gripping audiences with a tense prison escape plot.

At its core, this is a film about hope. Despite the turbulent events which have forced our characters to where they are, the film's central theme is that there is always a way out of the maze of conflict, if you choose to find it. In the case of our central protagonist Larry's journey, even though he succeeds in pulling off the prison escape of a lifetime, he sacrifices his own freedom for the sake of his family by deciding against going on it himself. And through his relationship with Gordon, he comes to realize that his war will soon have to be waged with words rather than guns.

In the ten years between the end of our film and the IRA ceasefire of 1994, prisoners and ex-prisoners, including some of those who were involved in the Maze escape, played a vital role in the push for peace. While extremely local, this film has a universal theme – how two opposing tribes must learn to live in a shared, but contested land.

–Stephen Burke

BACKGROUND

The Northern Ireland Troubles (1969-1998)

The Northern Ireland conflict spanned almost 30 years from 1969 to 1998 and cost over 3,600 lives.

The Troubles refers to a violent thirty-year conflict which began with a civil rights march in Derry on October 5, 1968, and ended with the Good Friday agreement in 1998. At the heart of the conflict lay the constitutional status of Northern Ireland.

The goal of the unionist and overwhelmingly Protestant majority in Northern Ireland was to remain part of the United Kingdom. The goal of the nationalist and republican, almost exclusively Catholic, minority was to become part of the Republic of Ireland.

At its heart lay two mutually exclusive visions of national identity and national belonging. The principal difference between 1968 and 1998 is that the opposing factions pursuing these rival futures eventually resolved to do so through democratic and peaceful means, rather than armed conflict. The road from violence to politics was long and cost over 3,600 lives.

As many as 50,000 people were physically maimed or injured, with countless others psychologically damaged by the conflict, a legacy that continues to shape the post-1998 period.

At the height of the conflict, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) – the main republican paramilitary organization in Northern Ireland – was uninterested in any solution short of British withdrawal and Irish unification. However, after almost 3 decades of conflict and stalemate, all sides found their way to the negotiating table where a historic peace agreement was sealed in April 1998.

The 1983 Maze Prison Escape

The Maze prison escape took place in HMP Maze Prison (also known as Long Kesh) on September 25, 1983, outside Belfast in County Antrim. HMP Maze was a maximum security prison considered to be one of the most secure prisons in Europe, and it held prisoners convicted of taking part in armed paramilitary campaigns during the Northern Irish conflict.

In what remains the biggest prison escape in UK history, 38 Provisional IRA (Irish Republican Army) prisoners escaped from H-Block 7 (H7) of the prison. The initial stages of the escape went according to plan. However, as the escape plan fell into disarray due to the timing of a shift change at the prison, a full-scale battle broke out between IRA men and prison officers, all of whom were dressed in prison officer uniforms. At the height of the battle, one prison officer was stabbed and died of a heart attack while twenty others were injured, including two prison officers who were shot with guns that had been smuggled into the prison.

The escape was a propaganda coup for the IRA and gave them a major morale boost after the failure of the hunger strike 18 months earlier, in which ten prisoners had died. The official inquiry into the escape placed most of the blame on prison staff, who in turn blamed the escape on political interference in the running of the prison.

Today, some of the former escapees are involved in politics. One of the 38 has never been seen since.

THE MAKING OF MAZE

One of the biggest challenges facing the production was how to recreate the now demolished Maze prison. The original plan was to build a small section of a H-block interior, and make up the rest through a variety of found locations. However, two months before production was due to begin, a significant piece of the film's financing fell through. While the producers set about replacing this lost finance, some surprising news reached the team. Cork prison in Cork city was about to be decommissioned.

Events moved quickly from there as the Irish Prison Service gave permission for filming in the newly vacant Cork prison, while Sweden's Film Vast stepped in to replace the lost production finance. The film became an Irish/Swedish Co-Production, shooting in a real prison in Cork, with a week of studio interiors in Gothenburg, Sweden.

The ability to shoot in a decommissioned prison ensured an authentic feel to the film. While Cork prison is very different to HMP Maze, it had some key similarities. The ground floor of the prison had a long wing divided in two by a double lock gate, just as it would have been in the Maze prison blocks.

"Shooting in a real prison was a massive advantage," says Tom Vaughan-Lawlor, who plays Larry, the architect of the escape. "There was no need to imagine the feel of incarceration; the walls, the cells, all the history of a building like that hung in the air."

Martin McCann, who plays fellow prisoner Oscar, agrees. "It helped immensely with our performance; the feel and atmosphere was very real." Martin was born and bred in Belfast, so he had a keen awareness of the history behind the project. "It's pretty much common knowledge in Northern Ireland that the escape took place. Anyone above a certain age would know or have heard of it. There are opposing views in the North about it, what the escape represented and its significance. I related to my character straight away as he was a man of my age, and as he is also from Belfast, there is a lot there already to relate to. Stephen's script was one of the best I've read in a long time."

Tom Vaughan-Lawlor continues, "I loved how the script was both a prison-escape thriller, and a drama about two men from very different backgrounds. It never sentimentalized the relationship, never took the obvious or easy route. My research was about finding out as much as possible about the escape itself but also about the history of the conflict. I met with

some of the escapees and it afforded me a very intimate understanding of the intensity of the time, and of the focus and discipline required to plan and execute something on that scale.”

For the production team, shooting a relatively large scale prison-escape film in twenty-five days required intricate planning. Barry Ward, who plays prison warder Gordon, enjoyed the hectic pace. “I like it that way. There’s usually too much hanging around on film sets. Nice to feel like you’re working the whole time.”

“The crew were very professional,” adds Martin McCann. “They helped make this film a reality without any issues. Logistically it was a complicated film to shoot so having a crew that had a high level of experience at their job and passion for the project was essential.”

Being based in the city of Cork also allowed the production team to use as much local talent as possible. “We were blessed with the quality of our supporting artists and extras,” says Tom Vaughan-Lawlor. “There was massive commitment from every one of them, and it wouldn’t be the film it is without them.”

Dozens of local Cork actors and extras took part in some of the larger prison escape sequences. “The local guys were amazing,” agrees Barry Ward. “Very warm and welcoming. The breakout scene, in particular, was amazing to do. The mayhem, the chaos, twenty or thirty men running at you in various get-ups, prison garb, warder’s uniforms, shouting and punching – that required no acting from me.”

For the final week of the shoot, the production moved to Gothenburg studio in Sweden to film some of the more intimate scenes between Barry and Tom. The Irish art department, led by production designer Owen Power, and the local Gothenburg crew went to great lengths to ensure that the sets built in Sweden were a perfect match to the Cork prison locations, including shipping over some of the furniture in advance. “The move from Cork to Sweden to finish off the film was seamless I thought,” says Martin McCann, “and the Swedish crew had done a great job at recreating the prison within the Swedish studio. It was a very friendly atmosphere and they made our jobs easier.”

“It was a nice bookend to the entire shoot,” says Barry Ward.



CAST



TOM VAUGHAN LAWLOR // Larry Marley

Tom graduated with a degree in Drama Studies at the Samuel Beckett Centre, Trinity College, Dublin and continued his training at RADA. He has recently appeared as the evil wizard Ebony Maw in Marvel's *Avengers: Infinity War*, opposite Ellen Page in *The Cured*, as Hugh Lane in *Citizen Lane*, in *The Infiltrator* opposite Bryan Cranston, and in Jim Sheridan's *The Secret Scripture*. Tom also played Padraic Pearse in *Trial of the Century*, and appeared as the role of PJ Mara opposite Aidan Gillen as Charles Haughey in the RTE drama *Citizen Charlie*.

He won wide acclaim playing the central character Nidge in all four seasons of the drama series *Love/Hate* (produced by Octagon Film, written by Stuart Carolan and

directed by David Caffrey) winning him both a Best Supporting Actor IFTA in 2010 and a Best Actor IFTA in 2013. Other notable film work includes *The Tigers Tail* opposite Brendan Gleeson, directed by John Boorman, and as "Robert Fowle" opposite Maggie Smith and Anne Hathaway in *Becoming Jane*, directed by Julian Jarrold, for Miramax Films.

In theatre, Tom appeared in a revival of an epic one man performance of *Howie The Rookie*, directed and written by Mark O'Rowe, which he performed at the Projects Art Centre and Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The show also played in Dublin, London and New York. He also appeared in a sold out run of *Our Few and Evil Days*, in the Abbey Theatre opposite Ciaran Hinds and Sinead Cusack.



BARRY WARD // Gordon

As a fourteen-year old Dubliner, Barry made his professional debut as John Paul Spencer in Roddy Doyle's highly acclaimed BBC drama *Family*, directed by Michael Winterbottom. He appeared in the leading role of Jimmy Gralton in Ken Loach's film *Jimmy's Hall*, and also in all 9 episodes of *Brittania* and all 6 episodes of *Barry*. Barry also appeared as the lead role in Paul Mercier's film *Pursuit*, opposite Brendan Gleeson, Ruth Bradley, and Liam Cunningham, and also played the lead in *Blood Cells* and *Bypass*. He was nominated for an IFTA for his role as Arthur Mahon in the RTE Drama *Rebellion*, directed by Aku Louhimies, for RTE/Touchpaper Films. Other recent projects include *L'Accabadora*, *The Truth Commissioner*, *Project Lazarus* and *The Journey*.



MARTIN McCANN // Oscar

McCann grew up in the working-class Divis Flats area of Falls Road in Belfast. He joined YouthAction NI's Rainbow Factory, a cross-community drama troop for Catholic and Protestant children. He made his feature film debut (as Jimmy Riley) in *Closing the Ring* (2007), directed by Richard Attenborough. Attenborough cast McCann after seeing him in a stage production of *A Clockwork Orange*. McCann plays Sergeant R.V. Burgin in the miniseries *The Pacific*, produced by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks. He won the 2011 Irish Film and Television Academy Award for lead actor in a feature film for his performance as Occi Byrne in *Swansong*, produced by Zanzibar Films. In 2016 he voiced Bobby Sands in the acclaimed documentary film *Bobby Sands: 66 Days*. Martin played the lead role in the critically acclaimed *The Survivalist*. Other film credits include: *'71*, *Clash of the Titans*, and *My*

Name is Emily. He had the lead role in *Calibre*, and played Paddy in Woody Harrelson's *Lost in London*.

CREW



STEPHEN BURKE (Writer/Director) is a director, scriptwriter and novelist. His first feature film was *Happy Ever Afters* (Newgrange Pictures), starring Golden Globe winner Sally Hawkins. *Maze* is his second feature film. His directing work for television includes the TV film *Anner House* (Littlebird), based on a story by Maeve Binchy; and the award-winning state of the nation series *No Tears*, which won Best Drama Series at the Monte-Carlo TV Festival. He began his writing and directing career making multi-award winning short films about the conflict in Northern Ireland – *After '68* and *81*. He has also worked as a writer on series television. His first novel, *The Good Italian*, set in colonial Eritrea, was published by Hodder & Stoughton in 2014. His second novel, *The Reluctant Contact*, was published in 2017.

JANE DOOLAN (Producer) began her career as a TV and radio producer for Saatchi and Saatchi advertising. She has worked for over 30 years in film as a producer and distributor. She was co-producer of *Into the West* (dir. Mike Newell, writer Jim Sheridan); producer of *The Brother*, a one man show based on the works of Flann O'Brien; associate producer of *In the Border Country* (dir. Thaddeus O'Sullivan); and associate producer of *Moondance* (dir. Dagmar Hertz). She founded Ireland's first independent theatrical and video distribution company Clarence Pictures, which has distributed over 200 films including *The Usual Suspects*, *Secrets and Lies*, and *Trainspotting* on behalf of PolyGram, Film4, Icon, and other independent distributors, as well as releasing many indigenous Irish films. Other credits include Executive Producer on *Spin The Bottle* for Grand Pictures and *Happy Ever*

Afters (2010), directed by Stephen Burke and produced by Lesley McKimm (Newgrange Pictures). Most recent credits as producer include *L'Accabadora*, an Italian/Irish co-production directed by Enrico Pau and starring Barry Ward (*Jimmy's Hall* and *Maze*), and producer of *Citizen Lane*, starring Tom Vaughn-Lawlor.

BRENDAN J. BYRNE (Producer) is an award-winning filmmaker who has made over 20 documentaries in a career spanning 25 years. His most recent non-fiction feature film *Bobby Sands: 66 Days*, a revealing portrait of Irish hunger striker Bobby Sands, broke box office records in Ireland in 2016 and screened at a number of prestigious international film festivals including Hot Docs (Toronto), Sheffield Doc Fest, Galway Film Fleadh, Antenna Film Festival (Sydney) and DOC NYC. *66 Days* was released theatrically in the USA in 2016. His first fiction feature as producer, *Jump*, was selected for the Toronto International Film Festival in 2012 and won the Cinema without Borders award at the Palm Springs International Film Festival in 2013. Brendan is currently Creative Director with Fine Point Films, who have a slate of feature documentaries in production with CNN, Netflix, ESPN, and BBC Storyville. His latest feature documentary as director/producer is *The Forgotten New Yorkers*, the remarkable untold story of how one million New Yorkers are buried in mass, unmarked graves less than 20 miles from downtown Manhattan. *Maze* marks his second feature film as a producer.

DAVID GRENNAN (Director of Photography) has worked in the Irish film industry for the past 20 years, starting as camera assistant on numerous TV dramas and feature films such as *Michael Collins* and *Angela's Ashes*. His Director of photography credits include *Eamon* (winner of the Independent Camera Award, 2010 Karlovy Film Festival); *Kisses* (dir. Lance Daly); *Between the Canals*; *What Richard Did* (dir. Lenny Abrahamson, nominated for an IFTA Director of Photography Award); and TV series *Ripper Street*. David has recently shot Season 3 of the critically acclaimed TV drama series *The Fall*, directed by Allan Cubitt and starring Gillian Anderson and Jamie Dornan.

STEPHEN RENNICKS (Composer) has, for sixteen years, been composing inimitable soundtracks for the best of Irish, UK, and European independent cinema and television. 2016 saw Rennicks score three of the most exciting features of the year: Lenny Abrahamson's Academy Award nominated *Room*, the remarkable documentary *Forever Pure* by Maya Sinshtein, and Paddy Breatneach's *VIVA*. *Room* marks Rennicks fifth collaboration with Abrahamson. Their first feature collaboration, *Adam and Paul*, won best film at the 2004 Irish Film and Television awards. Their second, *Garage* (Best film at Torino Film Festival, CICAIE Art Cinema Award Cannes), and *What Richard Did* in 2012 won critical acclaim. *Frank*, released in 2014, is a film with music at its heart and saw the music unanimously praised, with *Frank* the soundtrack number 3 in mojo's soundtrack Albums for 2014. Outside of his partnership with Abrahamson, Stephen Rennicks has written many acclaimed scores, including Paddy Breatneach's *Man About Dog* and Richard O' Donnell's award winning documentary *The Pipe*. *Maze* marks a return to working with director Stephen Burke, having collaborated on *81*, his previous short film on the northern Irish *Troubles*, the TV film *Anner House*, and his first feature film *Happy Ever Afters*.

AISLING WALLACE BYRNE (Costume Designer) is graduated with an honors degree in Fashion Design from Limerick College of Art & Design. Aisling was the overall winner of the Irish Trade Board fashion awards, specializing in designing leather. Her collections have featured on the Late Late Show fashion awards. For the past fifteen years, Aisling has worked as a costume designer for film and television both domestically & internationally, including three seasons of *RAW*, *Murphy's Law*, *Single-Handed*, *Happy Ever Afters*, *Jack Taylor*, and all five seasons of *Love/Hate*.

OWEN POWER (Production Designer) is based in Cork City and has been an art director and production designer for twenty years. His credits as Art Director include *Maudie*, *Love/Hate*, *Happy Ever Afters*, and *Wakewood*, and his credits as Production Designer include *Parked*, *Love Eternal*, *The Witness* and *Pilgrimage*.

JOHN O'CONNOR (Composer) has worked extensively in the Irish film and TV industry as editor of commercials, documentary, TV drama and feature films. His recent credits include the award-winning TV series *Moone Boy* and the feature films *The Stag* and *Handsome Devil*.

FULL CAST

Larry Marley	Tom Vaughan-Lawlor
Gordon	Barry Ward
Oscar	Martin McCann
Kate	Eileen Walsh
Henry	Lalor Roddy
Joe	Aaron Monaghan
Jill	Niamh McGrady
Danny	Ross McKinney
Senior Warder	Charlie Bonner
Widow	Elva Trill
Brendan	Tim Creed
Bobby	Cillian O'Sullivan
Gerry	Patrick Buchanan
Food Van Driver	Tom O Suilleabháin
Warder William	Andy Kellegher
Warden George	David Coakley
Maguire	Will Irvine
Ken	Stefan Dunbar
Craig	James Browne
Janet	Ella Connolly
Assassin	Keith Ward
Warder John	Michael Power
Tom	Rob Fawsitt
Michael	Sean T. O'Meallaigh
Garden Warder	Kevin O'Leary
O'Brien	Aidan O'Hare
Tower Soldier	Paul Elliot
Inquiry Inspector	David Murray
Comms Man	Padraig Feeney
Comms Woman	Eadaoin O Donoghue
Lookout	John G Doran

CREW

Writer / Director	Stephen Burke
Producers	Jane Doolan Brendan J Byrne
Cinematography	David Grennan
Production Design	Owen Power
Original Music	Stephen Rennicks
Costume Design	Aisling Wallace Byrne
Editor	John O'Connor
Casting	Maureen Hughes

Financed by Bord Scannán na hÉireann / Irish Film Board
RTÉ / Broadcasting Authority of Ireland / Film Väst

Filmed on location in Cork, Ireland and Gothenburg, Sweden