

New industry patrons for IFTUK

Leading film producer and executive producer Michael Ryan and BAFTA-nominated producer Farah Abushwesha have been named patrons of Irish Film & TV UK.

The appointments come as IFTUK marks its 15th anniversary.

The organisation was established to champion Irish screen talent and strengthen connections between the Irish and UK film and television industries.

Originally from Tipperary and now London-based, Michael Ryan's career spans production, financing, and international sales.

After working for Sir Lew Grade at ITC, he co-founded sales and financing company J&M Entertainment, whose credits include *Kiss of the Spider Woman, Homicide, Miles from Home, Highlander* and *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*.

Following the sale of J&M, Ryan continued to produce, finance and sell films including The General, The Testimony of Taliesin Jones, Fifty Dead Men Walking and the animated feature *A Greyhound of a Girl*, written by Roddy Doyle.

Ryan chaired the Independent Film & Television Alliance from 2015 to 2022 and is a regular speaker at international film festivals including the Galway Film Fleadh, Animation Dingle, the American Film Market and the Cannes Film Festival.

Joining him as a new IFTUK patron is BAFTA-nominated Irish Libyan producer, writer and founder of Rocliffe Productions, Farah Abushwesha. She works in film and television across the UK and Ireland.

Abushwesha's film and TV credits include *Lemonade*, award-winning documentary *Testimony*, Netflix's *Irreplaceable You*, science-fiction feature *Woken, Stags, No Return*, Christopher Hampton's *The Singapore Grip* and Agatha Christie's The *ABC Murders*.

Abushwesha founded BAFTA's Rocliffe New Writing Showcase and Initiative for new screenwriting talent.

Michael Ryan said: "The work IFTUK does promoting and supporting Irish productions worldwide is crucial to the continued industry success across film and television. I am pleased to play whatever part I can to showcase the breadth of talent found in Ireland."

Farah Abushweshasaid: "It's such an honour to become a patron. So much of my life and work has been shaped by moving between Ireland and the UK, and I know how valuable it is to find people who understand both worlds.

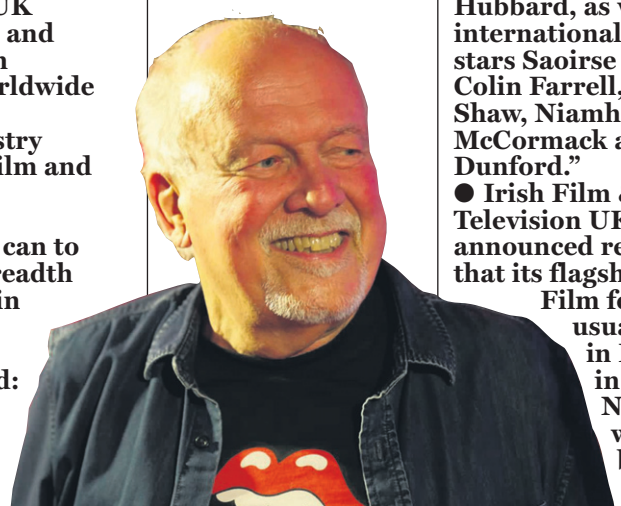
"It's a place to meet, watch films from Ireland, talk about the work and perhaps make something together.

"My God, the fresh-off-the-boat me would be wide-eyed."

IFTUK chair Carey Fitzgerald said: "IFTUK is dedicated to developing and encouraging new talent, as well as promoting established Irish talent, and having such eminent experts as patrons from all areas of the global film and TV business will help us to achieve this.

"They join our equally prominent industry patrons Lenny Abrahamson, David Freyne and Ros Hubbard, as well as international Irish stars Saoirse Ronan, Colin Farrell, Fiona Shaw, Niamh McCormack and Moe Dunford."

● Irish Film & Television UK recently announced recently that its flagship Irish Film festival, usually held in London in November, will now be in January.



Irish Libyan producer and writer Farah Abushwesha (ABOVE RIGHT) at last year's IFTUK Awards, and film industry veteran Michael Ryan from Tipperary (BELOW) have been named as new patrons of Irish Film & TV UK



Welcome back to Learn to Play!

I was saddened to hear of the passing of Tom a t'Seoighe this week, aged 96, who was a distinctive voice in Irish language song, as well as a prolific songwriter and poet.

Although a native of Clynagh, near Carraroe in Connemara, he spent many years in Cricklewood where kept up his love for Irish music as well as his preference of place-names beginning with the letter C.

He would eventually move back his favourite C - Connemara - and in 2020, he released a collection of his songs and poems in the book and CD entitled *Amhráin* which I reviewed on these pages.

What makes Tom's work so enduring was its closeness to the lives of ordinary people. His songs were not distant portraits of Ireland, but intimate accounts of a community he loved.



His legacy is therefore more than a collection of songs but a record of Connemara life and of the generations who travelled abroad while remaining emotionally bound to home.

His words and melodies helped keep that connection alive, passing memories and a sense of identity from one generation to the next.

As family, friends and admirers remember Tom a' tSeoighe, his songs remain a lasting testament to his creativity and to the culture that inspired him.

Though his voice is now silent, the stories he set to music will continue to be sung at home and across the world.

Helen