

MAY 2023

TREATMENT

# Dopey Dick

PRODUCER – HANNAH ADEY  
DIRECTOR – SHANNON ASHLYN  
WRITER – JUSTIN TREFGARNE

HANNAHADEYFILM@HOTMAIL.COM  
+44 (0) 77596671210





# Overview



**TITLE** - Dopey Dick

**GENRE** - Drama (Crime/Thriller)

**DURATION** - 13 minutes

**PRODUCTION LOCATIONS** - London, England / Derry, Northern Ireland

**SHOOTING DAYS** - 4

**CAST** - 5

**LOGLINE** - Derry, Ireland, 1977. 19-year-old Bridie McGee's dream is to join the IRA. When two of its members show up in town with her first mission, her conviction is put to the test.



# Synopsis



In 1977, Derry was known as the bleeding battleground of the Irish Troubles. But one November morning, that changed. A killer whale got lost in the Derry harbour. His misadventure earned him the name Dopey Dick. Craigavon bridge was lined with spectators and busses of school children arrived to marvel at him.

At McCloughsky's bar, 19 year old BRIDIE watches an evening news report, wondering if the whale will ever make it 'out of this toilet of a town'. FINNIS, 30s, the barkeeper, knows not to take her attitude too seriously.

The bell rings and in come DALTON, late 40s with lank, dark hair and a walrus moustache and FRANKIE, early 30s, with wild, angry eyes. Frankie nonchalantly flips the sign to 'Closed'...

Finnis hisses under his breath. Dalton beckons Bridie over to a booth. He asks her if she knows why they have come. She says she does. She's certain they are here to swear her into the IRA. Dalton says she needs to prove her conviction first. He asks her what she knows about Pàdraig Sweeney. Bridie knows Pàdraig well - he used to come round to visit her mammy after her daddy, an infamous IRA soldier, died in action. Frankie sniggers. Bridie's expression hardens. Dalton reaches into his pocket and pulls out a handgun. Bridie stares. She is to find Pàdraig Sweeney and kill him. Bridie catches Finnis watching. She looks back at him, unflinching.

The sun has set. Bridie walks up a side street lined with terraced cottages. She goes to the last one. The door is unlocked. Inside it's dark, apart from a soft glow coming from the front room. In an armchair sits PÀDRAIG SWEENEY, 50s, and he's pointing a gun directly at her. As she steps into the light, he lowers it. Bridie tries to pull out hers - it's stuck in her pocket. Pàdraig sighs. 'They're sending girls now? Christ.' Finally, Bridie gets the gun free. She tells him that she has to kill him. She says, she could say she missed. But Pàdraig just shakes his head. What would be the point? They'd just kill her, too. On the mantelpiece Bridie spots a photograph of a younger Pàdraig, his arm around a friend - her father. Bridie just stands there, gun raised, shaking.

Outside, not a soul around. Then BANG! A single gunshot rings out into the night. The door bursts open. Bridie runs as fast as she can.

She reaches the Craigavon bridge. She stops halfway, lungs stinging, staring down hard at the rushing black water. There! A shape breaks the surface. But it's too dark to tell what it is. Then it's gone. She pulls out the gun and drops it into the river.

Back at the bar, Bridie enters. For a few moments, silence. 'Did you see Dopey Dick?', asks Finnis. Bridie's eyes are burning. She's about to speak, but then decides against it.

# Main Cast



**BRIDIE MCGEE - 19 - played by RHIANNON BELL**

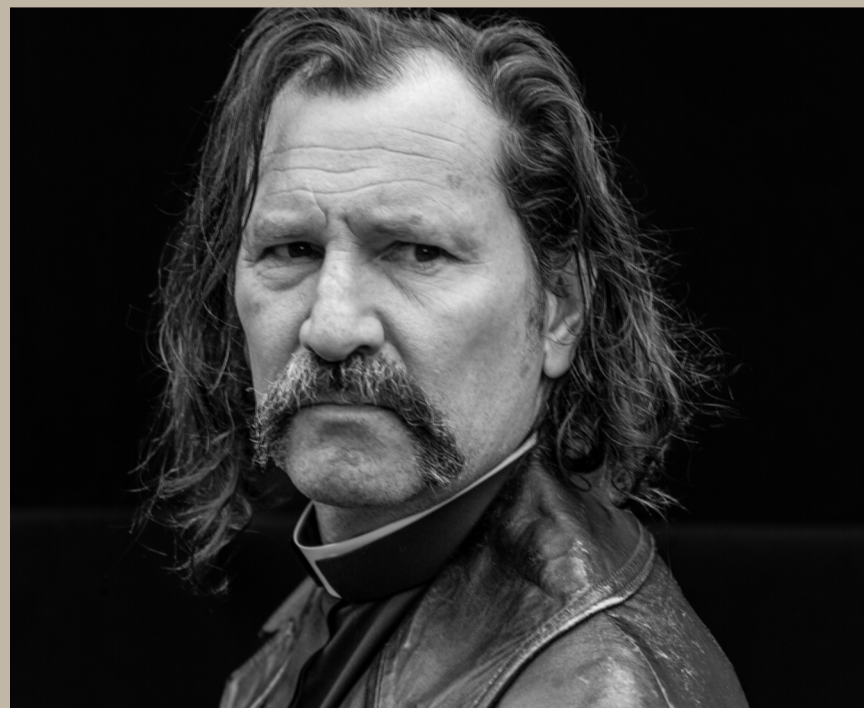
Quick-witted, irreverent and furious, Bridie was born with a rebel heart that she defiantly wears on her sleeve. She doesn't mince her words and she doesn't care what you think of her. That's what she wants you to believe, anyway. Her eyes are firmly set on the prize: to have her own mural on Belfast's notorious Falls Road.

But beneath the fireworks is also a young girl navigating the scary path into adulthood, who grew up too fast and who thinks that proving her bravery will earn her the love she never got.

**JOSEPH DALTON - 40s - played by BEN ADAMS**

One of the original IRA brigade men from the late 60s, Dalton has seen and done it all. When he arrives in Derry to recruit Bridie, he comes face to face with the same fervour he had in his youth.

Despite his hard exterior, can't help but be intrigued by Bridie's spirit and wit. This makes him even more determined to test her resolve.



**FRANKIE O'NEILL - 20s - played by BRYAN MORIARTY**

Frankie is a trigger-happy, unquestioning IRA footsoldier who'd be lost without the cause and the camaraderie it inspires. If it wasn't for this war, life would be a downward spiral of poverty and disillusionment. Put a gun in his hand and throw him into extreme danger and he comes alive.

When Frankie meets Bridie, he can't decide if he likes her or hates her. Either way, he's dead keen to find out if she really is as tough as she says she is.





# Director's Statement

Twenty-five years on from the Good Friday Agreement, I am humbled by the human spirit that prevailed in the face of centuries of adversity to achieve peace. Our story may be a glimpse into the past, but the themes are as relevant and necessary as ever.

DOPEY DICK is about Bridie, a young girl who thinks and feels deeply – who is an extremist in every way. She wants to rise up the ranks of the IRA by any means necessary to carry on her father's legacy of rebellion. This narrative pivots on a decision that will define the rest of her life.

This is a story about growing up and it's also about the irrevocable crossing of the threshold between dreaming and doing. For Bridie, it's about having to choose between two bad options. We all know that girls are expected to be good. But in Bridie's world, good girls die.

I am interested in stories about young women and I am especially intrigued when airtime is given to morally reprehensible ones. To me, shining the spotlight on a girl like Bridie is important because it reveals her to be a profoundly human, and therefore also a deeply flawed female character.

By the end of the film, the plot question will be: did she or did she not kill in the name of her cause? Underneath that, however, lies a much deeper thematic question concerning the fate of Bridie's soul.

Truth is, she's damned if she does and damned if she doesn't kill Pàdraig Sweeney. In a world of paramilitary codes, she's either a killer or a traitor. Eventually, she will have to accept that any absolution or redemption will have to come from within. Such is the heroine's fate. But that's a long way away – for now, she has youth on her side.

DOPEY DICK is a dark, irreverent genre film, but my aim is that it will leave us with a feeling of hope. When I saw the archival footage of the whale for the first time, it moved me in an unexpected way. I felt a rush of adrenaline and emotion at the sight of this wild, majestic creature in contrast to the man-made town. The faces of the children lining the bridge, beaming at the camera, say it all. For a brief moment in time, their lives were filled with transcendent beauty, not violence.

In her moment of need, Bridie wants nothing more than to behold the animal. I understand why.

At the end of the film, we return to this real-life story of the whale stranded in the Derry Harbour. Even if Bridie can't know it yet, we learn that Dopey Dick does eventually find his way out – to freedom.

Even if the journey is long and arduous, all rivers eventually lead to the sea.





# Style & Tone



The clash of harsh reality with an elusive youthful idealism runs through the core of this film. It's essential that our world looks and feels authentic, rough and matter-of-fact, but that the wit and candour of these tough and street-smart characters equally find expression.

In 1977, Derry was a marked by barricades, political graffiti and soldiers patrolling the streets where children also played. There were fewer people. No CCTV. Only a few channels on the TV. That analogue feel needs to infuse DOPEY DICK. The pub smells musty from the ale that has soaked the carpets and the stale smoke never really clears.

The elevated genre of the film demands that we actually push beyond historical accuracy. It sharpens the focus and drills down into familiar tropes in order to reveal something entirely new at their source. It's a vessel to tell a human story through a very specific lens.

This bygone age will be met with a camera that knows what it wants, that has its own story to tell. A story of details, moments, glances, reflections. The camera will move, seeking out its subject and revealing the layers of thoughts and feelings behind their blunt words. The visual style will be deliberate rather than incidental.

DOPEY DICK is an intimate portrayal of an unapologetic protagonist. Which means it's about faces – most of all Bridie's. The camera will be our guide, searching, probing her, and the characters around her, for fleeting glimpses of what lies beneath the surface.



# Locations



## MCCLOSEKY'S BAR

We arrive at McCloskey's Bar in 1977 but it might as well be 1967 or 1947 – plus a TV. Nothing much has changed. Everything is old and used; rough and familiar in equal measure. We will be looking for a traditional watering hole in the Greater London area.

In November, the sun sets by five in Derry, so the space will be lit and shaped artificially. The script requires good separation between the counter and the booth where the main conversation will take place. This also allows for creative blocking between the two areas which will keep the dance between the characters buoyant throughout.

## PÁDRAIG SWEENEY'S HOUSE

For the exterior of Pádraig Sweeney's, we will be searching for a street of simple townhouses. These are common near the Craigavon Bridge in Derry.

A London property will be used as the interior. We'll need a house that offers an entrance area/hall leading to a simple sitting room. The lighting will be moody, so only pockets of the space will be visible. Overall, the furnishings should feel unpretentious and muted. Some old wallpaper for texture would be an added bonus.



## CRAIGAVON BRIDGE

The Craigavon bridge is a landmark feature of Derry. We will shoot on the pedestrian walkway, facing away from any traffic, so as to avoid catching contemporary vehicles. The fact that it's night will help with this, too.

If safety is compromised – should a lockdown not be possible – we may have to find a less busy bridge to double for Craigavon in tighter shots.





# Team

## SHANNON ASHLYN – Director

Shannon grew up in Switzerland before moving to Australia to attend drama school. A graduate of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Shannon worked across stage and screen as an actor before stepping behind the camera. She completed a Masters of Directing at Australia's national film school in 2019.

Shannon's graduation short, SWEET TOOTH, started its festival journey at Cannes Cinema des Antipodes and is currently on the international circuit. Narrated by Cate Blanchett, it has won the CILECT CAPA award for best short and the Nicholas Baudin award for best short in St.Tropez.

## HANNAH ADEY – Producer

Originally from Kent and now based in London, Hannah Adey is a producer interested in world history, social issues and women's stories.

Alongside her work as a Coordinator of feature film production (Marvel, Miramax, Studiocanal), she collaborates with other young film talent on short films, most notably, OPAL (2020), which she produced. The film explores the story of a teenage boxer who tries to fill her idolised and abusive father's space in the family after his sudden passing. The short film screened in festivals across the UK and won Best Female Director (Indie Shorts Award, 2020).

Following short film, ROSE (2022) about a nightclub dancer returning to work after battling cancer is in post-production and set to hit festivals later this year.

## JUSTIN TREFGARNE – Writer

Justin's debut feature is the sci-fi thriller NARCOPOLIS. The film premiered at the EIFF in 2015 and was released by Altitude in the UK and IFC in the US.

Justin wrote the YouTube Original series, SHERWOOD, released in 2018. To date the show has had over 70m views.

From 2011 to 2014 Justin was head writer and voice director on the Nickelodeon reboot of children's classic PETER RABBIT for which he was nominated for an Emmy.

After a run in development at Working Title Films, he started making short films and writing screenplays including DESIRE (Damien Lewis) which opened the London edition of the Sundance Film Festival.

He has written screenplays for Film4, the BFI and Ruby Films, amongst others. The feature, SHAKE LOOSE THE BORDER is being developed as a co-production with Saoirse Ronan and Jack Lowden's Arcade Pictures.