

MEDIA RELEASE

Embargo: 13:00, 5th May 2006

RADHARC AWARD 2006 PRESENTED TO *'When You Say 4,000 Goodbyes'*

RTÉ documentary on Irish aid worker in Africa scoops prestigious award

The Radharc Award 2006 has gone to "*When You Say 4000 Goodbyes*", produced by Caroline Bleahen, RTÉ and presented by RTÉ reporter Jim Fahy.

It was announced today at an Award luncheon in The Burlington Hotel, Dublin that the television documentary on the work of Dubliner Dr Mike Meegan, an Irish aid worker who spent over a quarter of a century fighting poverty and disease in African villages, has taken the top prize in the biennial competition.

The Radharc Award is presented to a documentary programme of outstanding quality which addresses a national or international topic of social justice, morality or faith. There is no requirement that the programme makers be of any specific religious adherence, but the programme itself should imply a challenge to the moral conscience of the kind that inspired many Radharc documentaries.

The documentary tells the story of Dr Mike Meegan's work in African villages devastated by Aids, malaria and TB. The aid worker, who was awarded an Irish People of the Year International Award in 2003 and was recently awarded an honorary doctorate from NUI, went to work among Kenya's Masai people in 1979.

He has devoted his life to developing new scientific techniques to fight tropical disease and to helping empower Africans to solve African problems. The aid agency which he founded, ICROSS, is involved in providing clinics and medical services for up to 200,000 people in Kenya and Tanzania.

The winning documentary was produced by RTÉ's Caroline Bleahen and presented by RTÉ's Western Correspondent Jim Fahy.

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At the Award ceremony, producer Caroline Bleahen was presented with a bronze casting of the Radharc emblem - a detail from the High Cross at Moone, Co. Kildare - by guest-of-honour Boris Bergant, Vice-President of the European Broadcasting Union.

This year's Radharc Award was open to any qualifying documentary broadcast for the first time between 1 January 2004 and 31 December 2005 on any free-to-air channel receivable on the island of Ireland. Over 40 submissions were received for consideration by the jury, which was chaired by Denis Bradley, former Vice Chairman of the Northern Ireland Policing Board. Other jury members included Barbara Durack, Ronan Mullen and Anita Notaro.

"Sing and You Win", produced by Adrian McCarthy and Martha O'Neill, Wildfire Film and Television, was highly commended. The programme tells the life-affirming story of an Irish rural community brought together through the influence of one man, Archie Simpson, and his love of singing.

"Child Labour in India", the story of five children living and working in India, produced by Peadar King, KMF Productions, was also commended.

The Awards lunch was attended by key representatives from the leading independent producers, broadcasters, industry bodies and media in Ireland.

Radharc was the name of a popular religious affairs documentary series on RTÉ, which broadcast between 1961 and 1996. During its 35 years in operation, the Radharc team produced over 400 religious films in every corner of the globe. Radharc documentaries have won international awards and an international reputation, and became, in the words of a former RTÉ director general "part of the fabric of Irish broadcasting in a way that is unusual for a Religious programme."

The Radharc Award honours the memory of the late Fr. Joe Dunn, co-founder of Radharc.

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The competition is promoted by an Honorary Committee, under the chairmanship of Dr. George Waters, President, International Academy of Broadcasting and former Director-General of RTÉ. It is organised under the aegis of the Radharc Trust in association with IAB, the International Academy of Broadcasting.

The winner of the inaugural Radharc Award in 2002 was the RTÉ Prime Time documentary "*Complex Problems: St. Teresa's Gardens*", produced by Eddie Doyle, and the 2004 Radharc Award winner was Annette Kinne of Andec Communications with "*Fr Shay Cullen – Taking a Stand*".

The Radharc Award is sponsored by The Radharc Trust, RTÉ, TG4, the International Academy of Broadcasting and the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland.

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For more information please contact:

Karen Fitzpatrick,
ignite pr & marketing
T: +353 1 862 7877
M: +353 (0)86 814 9290
E: ignite@iol.ie

Editor's Notes

The History Of Radharc

Radharc Films has its origins in the late 1950s, in the years before Irish television began. There was much debate at that time about what the new television service would do in terms of news, sports coverage, drama, children's programming, and of course religion. The much-revered Archbishop of Dublin at the time, John Charles McQuaid thought that priests should learn about television so they could advise the new broadcasters. Two priests were sent to New York to learn about TV – Fr Des Forrestal and the late Fr Joe Dunn.

On their return to Ireland, Joe Dunn and priest colleagues made a couple of experimental films on religious topics and showed them to the first Controller of Programmes for the new television channel. The films were called Radharc. The controller liked them and told the 'Radharc Team' to go and make more! And so began one of the more unusual relationships in Irish broadcasting. So too began Ireland's first independent television production unit.

The Radharc Team produced over 400 religious films in every corner of the globe between 1961 and 1996. Radharc documentaries have won international awards and an international reputation, and became, in the words of a former RTE director general "*part of the fabric of Irish broadcasting in a way that is unusual for a Religious programme.*"

In the early years, Radharc became noted for its innovative approach, and the critics at the time were generous in their praise, calling it "outstandingly successful," "distilled television," "how television should be handled."

Part of the attraction of the Radharc style at this early stage of broadcasting was the approach adopted by the Radharc Team both in the subject matter and in its television treatment. Older Irish viewers remember the late Fr Peter Lemass as roving reporter, travelling the country at a time when television coverage from the regions was limited.

The documentaries stand the test of time - today's television audience will recognise the high production standards, and quality journalism of what began as a part time effort of a experimental film unit.

Radharc frequently followed the activities of Irish missionaries working abroad. This international dimension of the Radharc documentaries played its part in generating awareness and interest among Irish people in justice and peace issues around the world. Radharc kept its finger on the pulse of the world's trouble spots, bringing home seminal TV reports for the Irish Audience from Biafra, El Salvador, Chile, The Philippines, Nicaragua, Poland, Northern Ireland, Vietnam, Haiti, Burma, etc. As well as social and moral issues, Radharc also became noted for historical documentaries - always with a religious angle or context.

Thus the subject matter of Radharc Films was always a curious mix of themes, keeping the TV audience abreast of new thinking, attitudes and practices from the world of Faith and Spirituality.

Radharc Films ceased production in 1996 following the death of founder-director Fr Joseph Dunn. The substantial Archive of over 400 films is currently deposited with the Irish Film Archive, with copyright of the programme material jointly held between the Radharc Trust and RTE. The Archive is managed by Esras Films on behalf of the Radharc Trust

The Jury

Denis Bradley (Chair)

Denis Bradley lives in Derry and is a former Vice Chairman of the Northern Ireland Policing Board. He is a current Chairman and Chief Executive of Northland Films, and Director of Treatment and Education at the Northlands Centre, a centre for the treatment of addictions. He was a member of both the Northern Ireland Drugs Committee and the BBC Broadcasting Council. A founder member of the Bogside Community Association, he has long been associated with local community organisations. A well known political commentator, Denis writes a monthly column for the Irish News and received an Honorary Doctorate of Law from the University of Ulster (July 05) for his contributions to the community and the peace process.

Barbara Durack

Barbara Durack worked for many years as an archivist with the programme archive in RTE, contributing to a wide range of programmes on both radio and television, including 'Ireland - a Television History', an RTE/BBC co-production, the 1970s and 1980s series of 'Reeling in the Years', and 'Seven Ages' by Araby Productions for RTE. Her belief all through her career is that information is oxygen. Since leaving RTE she has worked on the four-part series 'Haughey' by Mint Productions for RTE, and 'Siar Sna Seachtoidi' with Gaelmedia for TG4. She is currently studying archaeology, local history/genealogy and folklore.

Ronan Mullen

Ronan Mullen is a native of Ahascragh, Co Galway. He is a practicing barrister and lecturer in Communication and Law at the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown, Co Dublin. As a weekly opinion columnist with the Irish Examiner, he is a frequent commentator on church and cultural affairs. He is co-founder of, and columnist with 'The Voice Today', a weekly family newspaper, and from 1996 to 2001 he was Communications Officer and spokesperson for the Dublin Archdiocese.

Anita Notaro

Anita Notaro is an author, journalist and television producer/director. She worked for RTE for sixteen years until 2002 and was involved in all of the major tam rating programmes. She has also worked for the BBC and Channel 4 in the UK. Anita has served on many international juries in Canada, Romania, Malta, and the Golden Rose in Montreux, Switzerland. Now a best-selling author of commercial fiction, she is published in the UK, Europe and Australia and her third book The WWW Club will be published in the USA this summer. She continues to work as a freelance television producer and is currently editing her fourth book.

Guest of Honour

Boris Bergant is Vice-President of the European Broadcasting Union and Deputy Director General, Radio-TV Slovenia. A journalist and broadcasting researcher, he studied journalism at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia and attended Kenyon College. He was editor of foreign affairs with Radio-TV Slovenia from 1981 to 1986, News Editor 1986-88, then deputy TV director until 1992 when he was appointed to his current position.

He received the Best Journalistic Achievement award in 1996, Best Documentary in 1978, and the TV award in 1981. He is a member of the European Institute for the Media; the Slovenian Council of the European Movement: the Association of Journalists of Slovenia, of which he was the President 1987-91; CIRCUM Regional, of which he was the President 1990-92 and has been Secretary-General since 1993. He has been Vice-President of the EBU since 1 January 1999.

Sponsors

The Radharc Trust

The Radharc Trust is an independent charitable organisation working in Ireland to promote high quality in the media. The Trust facilitates professional media integrity, media awareness through education and public debate on relevant media topics.

The trust approaches this work with a strong tradition behind it of over 400 documentary films produced on social and religious issues from a Christian perspective. The Radharc Archive chronicled life and culture in Ireland and across the world, and often presented complex issues of social significance to challenge accepted thinking.

In particular the Trust works closely with contemporary professionals, the next generation of media makers and media consumers.

RTÉ

Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ) is Ireland's Public Service Broadcaster. RTÉ, through all of its services, forms a major part of the infrastructure of Irish society. The distinctive leader in Irish media, RTÉ provides a comprehensive and cost-effective broadcasting service to the Irish public on radio and television.

As well as providing a broadcasting service, RTÉ also produces the country's best-selling entertainment magazine, the RTÉ Guide, RTÉ.ie and RTÉ Aertel, RTÉ's teletext service. RTÉ is a major contributor to the arts in Ireland and RTÉ Performing Groups supports five performing groups including the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra.

The RTÉ transmission network, RTÉNL, is a wholly owned subsidiary and operates the nationwide transmission network.

TG4

TG4 is Ireland's national Irish-language television channel. Over 800,000 viewers tune into the channel daily, attracted by an Irish language programme schedule of over seven hours of innovative quality programming in Irish, supported by a wide range of material in other languages.

TG4 invests over €15m annually in original Irish language programming from the independent production sector in Ireland. This investment supports 340 posts in small private sector companies throughout the island.

TG4 is a publisher/broadcaster. The station sources its programmes from independent production companies as well as from RTÉ, the national broadcaster for Ireland. It also broadcasts a range of other programmes in English including live coverage of Dáil Éireann, the national parliament.

The Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI)

The Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI) is an independent statutory body responsible for licensing, monitoring and developmental work with regard to television and radio services in Ireland. The role and functions of the BCI are set out in a range of provisions contained in the Radio and Television Act, 1988, the Broadcasting Act, 2001 and the Broadcasting (Funding) Act, 2003.

The Broadcasting (Funding) Act, 2003 gives the Commission responsibility for the disbursement of 5% of the licence fee to support new television and radio programmes.

The International Academy of Broadcasting

The IAB was founded in 1993 with the support of prestigious national and international broadcasting institutions such as the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the International Television Symposium (ITVS), the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU), the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU), the Organización de la Televisión Iberoamericana (OTI), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UNESCO.

Throughout the years since the establishment of the IAB, in parallel with the regular post-graduate course of studies and in association with leading international organisations, the IAB has organised a number of international Seminars, Workshops and Master Classes covering the most topical subjects of the world of broadcasting. Particular successes included the regular Broadcast Managers' courses and the DVB World conferences since 2001.