

Masterclass with **Brendan Byrne**

One Million American Dreams

Cleraun Media Ethics Forum

Wednesday 29 September 2021

19:15 to 21:30, online

For young documentary filmmakers and journalists



The film makes a valuable contribution to the argument that the city's forgotten people surely deserve better.

Brendan J Byrne

is an internationally recognised Belfast filmmaker who has been involved with the production of over 20 feature length films in the last 10 years. Recent works as producer / director include **My Name is Bulger** (Discovery +) and **Ryan McMullan: Debut**, both set for release in 2021. He produced the internationally successful **Gaza**, which world premiered at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival and was Ireland's official entry at the 2020 Oscars in the 'Best Film Not in the English language' category. His debut feature documentary **Bobby Sands: 66 Days** received international acclaim

following its Hotdocs 2016 World Premiere and went on to become the most successful Irish documentary at the box office that year. His narrative feature films as producer include **Jump** (TIFF 2012) and **Maze** (2017), which topped €1million at the Irish box office and is currently available on Netflix. Projects in development include feature documentaries **Children of Beirut** from the same team as **Gaza**, and **Chris Watson: A Journey in Sound** with the world-renowned sound recordist. He is also producing a narrative feature film **That They May Face the Rising Sun**, based on the

John McGahern novel of the same name, to be directed by Pat Collins. Other notable credits include **The Go Go's** (Showtime; Sundance 2020; Executive Producer), **An Engineer Imagines** (BBC/RTÉ; 2019; Producer), **Caught in the Crossfire** (Executive Producer; Hotdocs 2019), **Behind the Blood** (Producer; IDFA 2019), **Hear My Voice** (BBC; Director / Producer; 2018), **Mercury 13** (A Netflix Original; Producer; 2018), **George Best: All by Himself** (BBC/ESPN Films; Producer; 2017), **No Stone Unturned** (Amazon Originals; Executive Producer, with Alex Gibney as Director; 2017).

Case study: One Million American Dreams

In April 2020, Hart Island, just off the Bronx in New York City, was in national headlines when the city became the epicenter of the Covid-19 pandemic in the US. News footage of the island's cemetery showed trenches being filled with pine coffins. These mass burials were just the most recent in Hart Island's long history. Its potter's field cemetery dates back to 1869, and for over 150 years has served as a burial ground for over one million New Yorkers. Brendan Byrne's film **One Million American Dreams** provides the stories of a handful of them, including a Cuban man who moved to the city to send money back home and eventually succumbed to

dementia; his family members were unable to travel to America to claim his body. A Bronx woman lacked the funds necessary to bury her baby, whose burial records were subsequently lost. A devoted husband and father suffering from drug and alcohol addiction went missing and later died; his body was offered to a medical school for dissection and then buried anonymously on the island. The city later claimed that it had been unable to locate his family, but a *New York Times* journalist interviewed in the film was able to track them down with one phone call. The film makes a valuable contribution to the argument that the city's forgotten people surely deserve better.

Those attending will:

- Watch **One Million American Dreams** (90 minutes) in advance, with a view to answering a series of questions set by Brendan Byrne.
- On the evening of the masterclass, break into teamwork groups for 40 minutes to consider those questions among themselves; Brendan will spend time with each group.
- Then all join Brendan to discuss those questions, followed by an open forum.

Cleraun Media Ethics Forum

With the ongoing support of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), Cleraun Media Conferences (www.cleraunmedia.com) developed from a small event in 1986 into a national conference focussing on professional integrity and ethics. Following the last conference, it was decided to organise online masterclasses every few months for smaller numbers of young documentary filmmakers and journalists.

The aim is to allow those taking part to develop a network of contacts who could help one another when facing challenges in the context of professional integrity and ethics. The masterclasses are supported by Screen Skills Ireland and the BAI.

Upcoming masterclasses

- **Thursday 28 October 2021: Declan Lawn** (<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1767240/>): **The Salisbury Poisonings** (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p08dqns1> and <https://www.rte.ie/player/series/the-salisbury-poisonings/SI0000010888>)
- **Wednesday 1 December 2021: T J Berden** (<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm3885256/>): **Unguarded** (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11660938>)

Recent masterclasses

- **June 2021: Marcus Vetter**, award-winning German documentary filmmaker: **The Heart of Jenin** (Best Documentary, German Film Awards 2010)
- **April 2021: Martina Durac**, award-winning documentary filmmaker: **The Rehab**, 3-part production, Virgin Media One, 2017
- **February 2021: Lisa Pereira**, RTÉ Morning Ireland studio and web producer: **Why accuracy and fairness matter**
- **December 2020: Michael Beattie**, award-winning Belfast documentary filmmaker: **Robert Campbell — Mountain Man**,

Attendance limited to 30 participants. The event is free of charge.

To book:

cleraunmediaethics@gmail.com

Further information:

Paul Harman (paulharman3@gmail.com)

Stephen Desmond (stephen.desmond@solent.ac.uk)

David Conroy (davidcjconroy@me.com)