

SDGI Mentorship Programme

SCREEN DIRECTORS GUILD OF IRELAND

idea was to shoot the scene from a number of angles and as a result the art department had designed two rigs: one stage for the actors and one for the stunt man (which could be shot from above and below the trapdoor, side angles, etc.). It was a really impressive setup and handled patiently and professionally at all times. It was the final shot in Daniel's directorial block and, as the last frame wrapped, it was great to see the happy faces and appreciation by all on a job well done.

Editing

And on to the edit! After a Christmas break (and a shoot of my own where I tried to apply some of the techniques and tips I had picked up), Daniel invited me along to Screen Scene to see how the edit of films 1 and 2 were shaping up. Editor Ray Roantree had been working hard and the rough cut was looking and sounding excellent. I watched a fantastic casino intro sequence come together: a lovely Steadicam shot with plenty of extras and overlapping action to 'avoid' a cut, followed by a humorous exchange between Gently, Bacchus and Fawn Grainger (played by the excellent Nichola Burley). I also got to see some final edits to the first film in the series – a really well-crafted, tense sequence (where Gently makes a shocking discovery) got the once over and was flowing brilliantly as the final cuts were made. It was great to see the full edit suite in operation and get a sense of the organisation and workflow for a production of this scale. Can't wait to see the final *George Gently* films on the box in early spring!

I'd like to thank all those at Manor TV and Screen Scene for accommodating the mentoring sessions and a special thanks to Daniel for being so patient and supportive. I know it's hard enough to get the job done on time without some eejit at your side asking questions! And thanks to Birch, Claire and Liz at the SDGI for hosting and initiating the mentoring program. It's an excellent way to learn from experienced directors and pick up practical advice. I know that I learned an immense amount and will carry that knowledge forward to future projects.



AARON O'REILLY is mentored by *George Gently* director Daniel O'Hara.

It was a chilly Thursday in December when I joined the set of *George Gently*, a BBC1 detective drama series set in north-eastern England in 1964. Having landed the SDGI mentoring spot with director Daniel O'Hara, I was looking forward to seeing an experienced crew working a primetime film series, and I certainly wasn't disappointed.

Shadowing

The helpful and friendly faces of Company Pictures/Manor TV's production crew guided me to Daniel who filled me in on the plan for the day's shoot. The entire crew had been busy for the past seven weeks shooting the first and second films in the series and I was going to shadow Daniel through some key scenes, including heated exchanges between *George Gently* (played by Martin Shaw, a true gentleman and great performer) and Bacchus (the entertaining and talented Lee Ingleby), a number of key police interrogations and a complicated stunt hanging scene!

The tour of the set was amazing: the old Smurfit building in Glasnevin had been transformed into a police station, complete with offices, interview rooms, period police vans, prison cells, a casino(!) and two giant 'hanging sets'. The art department had been busy building and testing the hanging rig and Daniel talked me through his plan for the giant set – a really impressive setup indeed.

Framing

As the crew began working through the scenes I kept a close eye and ear on Daniel, picking up some brilliant tips on staging actors and allowing them to create new frames as they move through the beats. I was particularly impressed by how Daniel moved action through the police corridors, using the timing of character arrivals and their positioning to create

new frames and increase the flow of tension within the same shot. Watching Peter Robinson operate and control the lighting was a pleasure, and all the crew had a great rapport, working at a really fast pace and anticipating each other's responsibilities. I also picked up tons of useful continuity tips from Kathleen Weir (through persistent badgering!) and managed to make it through the first day without knocking anything over or breaking any equipment, phew!

There were some lovely exterior scenes planned. Despite a cruel breeze the actors and extras endured, the shots looked great. The art department had transformed the front of the old building into a fully operational police headquarters – a sequence tracking a group of police officers into an old prison van was brilliantly orchestrated and timed by all the crew. That afternoon was followed by a poignant prison cell sequence and the grand finale: the hanging. Daniel's

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Stills courtesy of Manor TV