

Spraoi Unseen



Dónal O'Flynn, reporting for TCR FM on Christmas Day 2014. | Photo: Daniel O'Neill.

Spraoi Unseen is a new, feature-length documentary that explores the highs and lows, the madness, the mayhem and the abundant craic that goes into producing the annual 'Spraoi weekend'. Shot over the August bank holiday in 2014, the film includes interviews with management, performers, volunteers and members of the public. It will get its first screening at Garter Lane on Saturday night.

Dónal O'Flynn was co-editor and sound recordist on the project. He said the shoot was an eye-opener to himself and co-editor/camera man Sean Corcoran.

"I got to know Sean briefly when we both worked on last summer's Promenade Festival in Tramore. Spraoi were so helpful to us when we were putting that together, in terms of giving us a look at how they put their festival together. It was great to see how an established festival was run and, afterwards, we really wanted to see Spraoi up close ourselves.

"I think the idea for Spraoi Unseen really started out because Sean had a new camera that he wanted to try out. He asked me to help out with the project because I knew something about sound. We barely knew each other so it was a case of us getting to know each other as we shot the documentary.

"What will be really interesting to anyone who has been to a Spraoi to see how it all comes together and how much is going on out at the Spraoi Studio in the few days before it begins, the layers of management and the countless jobs that people have to do."

When he's not making documentaries, Dónal is a first year journalism student with Griffith College in Dublin. He's also been a volunteer with Tramore's community radio station TCR FM since the station was launched.

"I was actually the first voice on air at the station, on 9th May 2011, presenting Good Morning Tramore. I was in Transition Year at the time. Over the years I've done a lot of presenting but also been involved behind the scenes helping other people with their programmes. I was willing to learn on the job and as a result I ended up working in every area, at some stage or other.

"I love singing, I was with the Richie Hayes Stage School for four years so I'm trying to combine all my interest. With that in mind, I'm in the process of launching Donal O'Flynn Media, with the tagline Music, Media and More."

Spraioi Unseen offers viewers a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the build-up to the much-loved family festival, as well as ample footage of the fun on the streets of Waterford over the weekend itself.

"Basically we hung around the studios in the few days coming up to the festival and then we were on the streets for the entire festival itself. So we had loads of footage of the floats out at Carrickphierish, everyone getting ready, putting the finishing touches to floats and costumes.



Members of City of Waterford Brass performing in last year's Spraioi parade.

"When it came to the filming, they really gave us a free run and left us to it. It was a very open process. We would have done several interviews with some of the key characters over the few days, Mike Leahy, TV Honan, Dermot Quinn and Nick Kavanagh. These were done at different points during the weekend so collectively they paint a good overview of what's going on for each of them.

"We were conscious that we wanted to see what happens with the many volunteers so basically we talked to whoever we came across. We got some great footage, one of my favourites was some filming a group of volunteers in the rain who burst into song.

"To people's credit, nobody said 'No' to being interviewed. A lot of the volunteers might just contribute a couple of hours but it's the fact that there are so many of them working together that brings it over the line.

"We also wanted to see the public reactions to the festival so we pretty much hung around the streets and filmed everything we saw, I think we must have spoken to about 70 or 80 people. Sean would have gone through these hours and hours of footage and then he gave me editing notes. It was mad, during the editing process I came across so many interviews that I had completely forgotten about. What does come across so strong though is the enthusiasm of the people on the streets for Spraioi."

The documentary, Dónal said, will take viewers to integral parts of the Spraoi festival that are never visible to the public.

“For me, the most interesting thing we filmed was an interview with Clare {Horgan} in the costume room, when she described the idea behind the costumes. It was fascinating to see those costumes being brought to life during the parade but so much thought goes into creating them.

“Another great part for me was filming in the hour or two in Johnstown before the parade starts, when people arrive in their normal clothes and then get costumed and painted up.

“I think someone actually described it in an interview, that ‘they change from being generic members of the public into their performing selves’. It is an amazing sight to see, all these people walking in normal and walking out completely transformed. I think the audience will love it.”