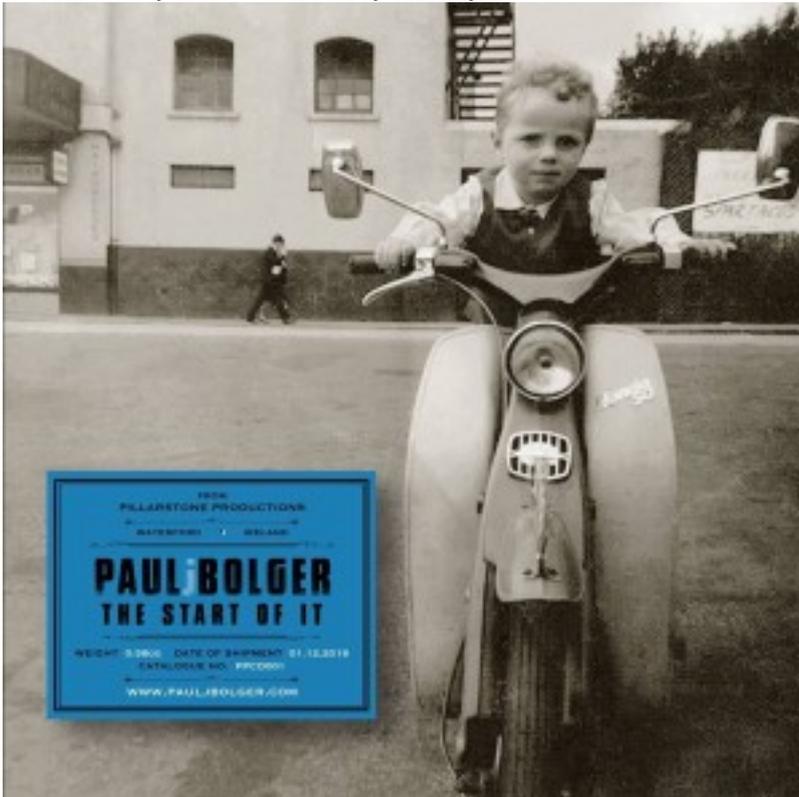


## Paul J. Bolger: From Mooncoin to Montreal

Local artist keeping his fingers in different pies

Eoghan Dalton Reports

Waterford artist Paul J Bolger keeps busy, delving into different mediums, as well as travelling between Mooncoin and Montreal for his work. Here's a quick list of what he's working on currently; a music EP with an album to follow, an animated feature, adapting a comic into a blockbuster film series, and not to mention a local project or two. "I like to hop," he offers by way of explanation. His latest project required him to be in Downes's Bar on Thomas Street last Friday. "It's kind of rock 'n' roll, a bit bluesy and roots too really," he says about 'The Start of It', his EP.



'The Start of It', Paul Bolger's EP, was launched on Friday last.

Long-time friend and lead singer of The Horslips, Barry Devlin came up with a different description for the music Bolger has made for the release: bog gothic. "So, technically, I've been labelled in this standalone field," he laughs. As for inspirations, he cites American singer-songwriter Mark Lanegan and Fleetwood Mac.

It features some stellar playing from Monaghan bassist Ronnie O'Flynn, Michael Black on drums and percussion and US film composer Cathleen Flynn on piano. It was mixed and mastered by Antrim's Frankie McClay at his highly sought after Einstein Studios.

There are four songs on the EP, with four short films to match. All directed by Paul, award-winning local performers such as Michael Power and Bonnie Boux are among the cast. They're co-produced by Paul's PillarStone Productions and Labyrinth Management & Events and have been released on Youtube, Facebook and more outlets to coincide with the EP launch. Other Waterford-based creatives took part. Paddy Barron, a Dubliner now living in Dunhill, was the cameraman. Mook Vignes of Tramore, was artistic director while Mark Power who recently returned from Canada to Tramore was editor.

Meanwhile, one of the videos was shot in Waterford Academy of Music and Arts (WAMA) and another in Phil Grimes's Pub. As the above shows, they're local productions and deliberately so, as "everyone knows what they're doing". It was a quick turnaround too, with the four films completed over the past fortnight.

The EP is available for download on all music and streaming platforms and a limited edition CD will be available in Golden Discs in City Square and Rollercoaster in Kilkenny. A follow up EP is in the works, with the same team as 'The Start of It', and set for release next February. A full album is in the works with Canadian producer, Hugh Christopher Brown, who counts Barenaked Ladies and Tom Jones as past accomplices.

Paul's return to music, he says, was sparked by Kilkenny Roots Fest favourite David Corley, brought to Ireland by Hugh Christopher Brown. The Waterford man had supported Corley in Shortts in 2015. Aside from live action, Paul plies some of his trade in animation. At the moment he's working on a family film by the studio Cinesite, in Montreal, which counts the Marvel franchise among its regular partners.

The plot remains secret for now, but it's set in Ireland and is due for release around St Patrick's Day in 2020, so read into that what you will. Having spent some time there earlier in the year for the film ("I always say that I live in Ireland but work abroad"), he now goes over roughly every six weeks. He's supervising visual effects for the film, which is CGI, and thinks he might be best described as an architect of sorts.

"It's like building a house," he says. "You draw up the blueprints and then you supervise to make sure the blueprints are being followed." A longstanding project of his is bringing the Cú Chulainn myth to the screen. The comic book trilogy he illustrated and co-wrote alongside Barry Devlin of Horslips on the warrior, The Hound, won him success, but the ambition to develop it for a new medium is taking its time. "It's something I've been working on all my lifetime," he adds. He notes that, thanks to backing from the Irish Film Board and the Northern Irish Film Board, it now has a script, concept art, storyboards, as well as a short trailer made purely for winning producers over to the project. A trip to the Cannes Film Festival for the comic's adaptation is in the diary for 2019 as well.

It's been costly so far, and is bound to be even more so, but Paul has been adding collaborators along the way.

One is Dermot Power, a designer with plenty of fantastical films on his CV already, such as the Harry Potter series and, perhaps most relevantly, the 2007 adaptation of 'Beowulf' with Angelina Jolie.

A six-part miniseries has also been discussed. "It's such an expensive series, but Irish myths are not as well known as the Norse ones so we're trying to get it to be seen that there's a lot of potential for great stories from Celtic mythology," he says.

What he feels marks his own take on the legend as different is that he wrote the stories from the point of view of Cú Chulainn's enemies. Before a blockbuster production gets the greenlight though, a paperback collection of the comic trilogy is to be released. As he has so many projects on the go at any one time, taking up space in his brain, how does he cope? He rightly points out that out of 101 ideas developed, often only one gets brought into existence.

"When you aim for the sky you might hit a cloud...But every project is different. I can pull in favours where I can, or do favours for people and that helps." He also points to the internet as something that's helped. "It puts me in a position, if a producer is looking for something, like maybe a song for a film, I can use stuff like Bandcamp to send on my songs and let him get a sense of the vibe." "It's opened it up a lot more, where you're not relying as much on trying to get your CD into the right hands. Film is still like that, where you're hoping to meet the right person and are relying on that."

When his projects do get greenlit, he finds what he enjoys is working "with people who've never done it and people who are at the top. It lets you help people along, who are just learning, and then on the other side, you know you're getting some of the best quality work around. It just works really well".

After around 30 years in the business, he's enjoying himself and doesn't seem like he'll be going short of work anytime soon either. "I get to do work on what I want at this stage, and I haven't made a penny since I was 18 that wasn't from art or drawing - that's good."