



GUARD

Short • 13 min 26 sec • Drama, Sport (UK, Ireland)

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PROJECT SUMMARY

First-time Director: Jonathan Harden
F rated (female writer and lead role: Bronagh Taggart)
100% Crowdfunded via Indiegogo

Completed: June 2017

SYNOPSIS:

An emotionally hardened young woman wrestles with difficult memories when her estranged father returns from time in prison. As he teaches her how to box, reconciliation seems possible, but their traumatic past will not be washed away.

“an important female story” *Gillian Anderson*

“it’s been a long time coming” *Michael Conlan*

GUARD is a short boxing film set in Belfast, written by and starring Bronagh Taggart (*The Fall*). The cast also includes Michael McElhatton (*Game of Thrones*) and Ian McElhinney (*Game of Thrones*). It is actor Jonathan Harden's directing debut.

Directed by

Jonathan Harden

Written by

Bronagh Taggart

Produced by

Jonathan Harden, Bronagh Taggart, Sean A. Murray

Cinematography by

Ryan Kernaghan

Film Editing by

Brian Philip Davis

Cast:

Katie - Bronagh Taggart

Kieran - Michael McElhatton

Geordie - Ian McElhinney

Auntie Mary - Carol Moore

Trainer - Mosa Kambule

CONTACT*:

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*High Res images available on request, or at www.guardshortfilm.com

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CREW BIOS:



Jonathan Harden
Director/Producer

- 1st time director
- actor
- credits include: 'The Last Jedi', 'Victoria & Abdul'
- Northern Irish

Film Credits as an actor include: Rian Johnson's *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (Bad Robot, Lucas Film), Stephen Frears' *Victoria & Abdul* (Working title), Ralph Fiennes' *The Invisible Woman* (BBC Films), and Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Five Minutes of Heaven* (BBC Films), as well as *Another Mother's Son* (Bill Kenwright Films), *The Truth Commissioner* (Big Fish, BBC Films), *The Ones Below* (BBC Films), *The Good Man* (Manifesto Films), *Whole Lotta Sole AKA Standoff* (Generator Entertainment), *Jump* (Blinder Films), *Ghost Machine* (Generator Entertainment), and *Ditching* (Factotum).

TV credits as actor include: *SS-GB* (BBC), *My Mother and other Strangers* (BBC), *The Secret* (Hatrick, ITV), *Peep Show* (Objective, Channel 4), *Unforgotten* (Mainstreet, ITV), *Humans* (AMC, Kudos, Channel 4), *Halo: Nightfall* (Scott Free), *The Mimic* (Channel 4), *The Life and Adventures of Nick Nickleby* (Kindle, BBC), *Titanic: Blood & Steel* (Antena 3, Rai), *Boy* (Touchpaper, Channel 4), and *Small Island* (BBC).

Jonathan lives in London with his wife, Bronagh, and their rescued lurcher, Gracie.



Bronagh Taggart
Writer/Lead Actor

- TV writer (20+ episodes)
- best-known for her role in 'The Fall'
- Northern Irish

Her first script - a 30 minute comedy-drama pilot - was selected for a BAFTA-Rocliffe New Writing showcase in 2010. After gaining her first broadcast credits on BBC drama *6Degrees* in 2011, she was commissioned to write a total of seven episodes over its three series run, including the finale. She has since gone on to be commissioned to write over 20 episodes of shows for Zodiak, BBC, and Disney, and is developing an original project with Touchpaper TV for BBC.

Her original 30 minute film, *Call it a Night* was one of six scripts chosen for Touchpaper TV/Channel 4's *Coming Up* series in 2013.

As an actor, Bronagh was most recently seen in the second and third series of *The Fall* (Artists Studio, BBC). Other credits include the BAFTA-winning *Occupation* (Kudos, BBC), *Best: His Mother's Son* (BBC), as well as many roles on stage and radio, including the epic 2012 adaptation of James Joyce's *Ulysses* for BBC Radio 4.

Bronagh and Jonathan have worked together previously on several projects, both on stage and screen, including *The Dinner Party*, a short film directed by Oscar-nominee Michael Lennox.



Michael Lennox
Executive Producer

- trained at the NFTS
- Oscar-nominated
- BAFTA winner (2015)
- Northern Irish

His short *Boogaloo and Graham* - narrated by Guard director Jonathan Harden - won the 2015 BAFTA for Best Live Action Short and was nominated for an Oscar. Since his first short, *Rip and the Preacher*, which was selected by the British Council to tour over twenty festivals worldwide, Michael and Jonathan have collaborated on a number of film projects.

Other credits include the half hour drama *Eclipse* as part of the *Coming Up* new talent scheme for Touchpaper/Channel 4, short *The Back of Beyond* which won a Royal Television Society Award, the Premio Pianific prize at Locarno Film Festival 2012, and was the short film nominee for the European Film Awards. Michael's feature debut as director, *Patch of Fog*, was awarded funding from the BFI and received its world premiere at the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival.

Michael also shoots and directs documentaries, most recently making *Kick Me* a feature-length documentary about a world-renowned kick-boxing club in East Belfast. Most recently, Michael made transition into TV, directing a 90 minute episode of *Endeavour* for Mammoth/ITV.

He is currently directing *Derry Girls*, a brand new comedy series for Hatrick and Channel 4.

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

As an actor, it's easy to imagine you'd make the transition to directing easily; over nearly 20 years in the industry, I've learned to talk a pretty good game. But with Guard, I constantly felt like I'd bitten off more than I could chew. And I was producing at a scale that seemed to spiral daily. On set, I was calling Guard my 'One Film Film School'. I was only partly joking.

As a project, it began when my wife (an actor and TV writer) handed me a script to read. In our 16 years together, this had literally never happened; I get into trouble for reading over Bronagh's shoulder when I bring her a cup of coffee. This she was giving me to direct, but with one key cast member already attached: herself.

While Bronagh's been busy writing things that pay the bills, I've tried to write shorts and failed. It's hard, and to be honest, so few short scripts I have ever read get anywhere close to the point where I think "I want to act in this", let alone direct it. Guard was different. I wanted to do it. Or rather, I didn't want anyone else to do it.

We considered funding it with our own money, but eventually decided we wanted to do it on a scale that would allow me, and everyone else, to deliver on the promise of the script. We needed - I estimated - £8,000. And a lot of goodwill.

And so we launched a crowdfunding campaign that attracted the support of Gillian Anderson and Liam Neeson, and which would see us raise well over

£20,000, secure a post-production deal and - most exciting of all - a small cinema release in Northern Ireland. We pushed the campaign so hard that Bronagh ended up on the front of papers, in magazines, and on the radio. We were, by necessity, the highest profile unfunded, unmade short film in Irish cinematic history.

The pressure was HUGE.

I slept an average of four hours on each of the three nights we shot Guard, and about the same in the week before we went into the edit. I was waking up in the middle of cutting a scene in my head, panicking that we'd have to reshoot most of it, and most of all, worrying that I'd look like a fraud and that I'd let down almost 300 people who had invested their money, time and expertise. No one ever mentions that bit in the crowdfunding blogs.

That said, they're right about one thing: you make a film three times. The script made me cry when I first read it. The filming nearly made me lose my mind. And the edit felt like a joyful rediscovery.

I hope people connect with our story. I hope we get to tell another.

Jonathan Harden
London, June 2016

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PRODUCTION NOTES:

Giving 5% of the budget to a women's charity

As part of our campaign to secure funds to make the film, we pledged to donate 5% of the total raised to Womens Aid NI, the lead voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland addressing domestic and sexual violence and providing services for women and children.

As a consequence, on December 19th 2016, we were delighted to be able to transfer £875 to their account to help them continue their amazing work.

Read their short blog on the donation here: <https://www.womensaidni.org/belfast-boxing-film-crowd-funder/>

The last film at the historic Casement Park?

By far one of the most difficult elements of pre-production was negotiating access to the now disused Casement Park in West Belfast. Until recently, Casement was the principal Gaelic sports stadium in the city and has been home to the Antrim football and hurling teams since 1953, but is currently closed pending a controversial redevelopment. In the end we were able to access the stadium for just two hours, including time for the Art Department to prep the location, but were lucky to keep to our schedule and catch the main stand at magic hour. To date, no other film has been granted access to the site since it closed, and Guard may prove to be the last appearance of the famous stand (and perhaps even the pitch) on film.

"Severe mountain mist"

The opening of the film was intended to be a longer running sequence in which the mountains that surround Belfast would be prominent, but on the morning of filming, an uncharacteristically heavy fog descended, entirely obscuring the view of the mountain. At breakfast, we changed the schedule, moving the mountain shots to later in the day in the hope that the fog would have by then at least partially cleared. At the first location, it seemed to disappear behind us as the camera was pointed in the opposite direction, but the by the time we got to the crucial shots, it was back, and worse than before. Our 1st Assistant Director, Ciaran Colton, who has worked on several seasons of Game of Thrones, much of which is filmed on the mountain, said he had never before seen a weather forecast that read "Severe Mountain Mist" let alone delivered on it. The opening sequence ended up being much shorter, and the mountain remains only briefly in one shot - as Katie runs across a motorway foot bridge - still partially obscured by the fog.

Clonard Boxing Club - a Belfast institution

The film's boxing scenes were filmed in the historic Clonard ABC in West Belfast, which moved to a brand new gym just weeks after filming. The gym in the film is where professional boxer Michael Conlan trained for several Olympic and World Championships, and has never before been used as a film location.

Casting Michael McElhatton

When we began work on producing Guard, the very first thing we decided was aim high: "start at the top and work your way down" was the motto on every element of production. Thankfully, we got the people, locations and equipment we wanted, without much compromise.

With casting, we decided to ask Robert Sterne - casting director of The Crown, Game of Thrones and Wolf Hall - if he'd be interested in helping us find the right actors. After we sent him the script, he came on board and we started talking about who might play Kieran.

We'd always been a fan of Michael McElhatton's work - his final scene in series 1 of The Fall is truly breathtaking - but he is a very busy guy, and spends a lot of time away from Ireland. On Robert's advice, we sent him the script and Jonathan wrote an accompanying letter explaining more about the project and why we wanted him to be involved. When he replied to say he was interested, it was game on. In Bronagh and Michael, we had our two lead actors, and by that point our budget was in place. The next big step was setting dates...

Eventually, after much shuffling and reshuffling, we were able to work our dates around Michael's hectic schedule. At points, it seemed like we'd lose him, but as an actor himself, Jonathan was adamant that his first project as a director would be built around the cast.

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Crowdfunding: with a little help from our friends

At the beginning of the crowdfunding campaign, Bronagh and Jonathan hoped to reach just £8,000, enough to cover the initial production costs. The plan had been to raise completion funds based on the quality promised by a rough assembly. As it turned out, the campaign raised enough to cover everything, not least thanks to the intervention of several well known names.

As the campaign progressed, the team approached several industry contacts to ask for support, and on nearly every occasion, they were happy to put their weight behind the project. From BAFTA-winning director Nick Murphy, to Elaine Sperber, the former VP of production at HBO, the list of notable backers kept growing. Jessica Raine, Bronagh Waugh, Niamh McGrady, Geraldine Hughes and Sinead Keenan all lent their voices to the chorus of actresses supporting Bronagh in her fight to make Guard, while Gillian Anderson in particular praised our pledge to give 5% of funds raised online to Women's Aid NI.

As we pushed towards our target, boxers Paul Smith Jnr and Michael Conlan offered their backing, actor James Nesbitt came on board as an Executive Producer, and it all started getting ridiculous when Liam Neeson's agent got in touch to say that he too was supporting the project.

By the climax of the Indiegogo, we had raised £17,500, of which we donated £875 to Women's Aid NI.

Bronagh's boxing training

More than any other part she's ever played, Guard required Bronagh to do some serious physical preparation. She started learning how to box three months before Guard went into production, at Miguel's Boxing Club in Brixton (London). In addition to her own fitness programme (including training for her first half marathon), Bronagh attended one-on-one sessions with a team of professional boxing trainers for a few hours each week, with occasional additional sparring sessions with director Jonathan Harden in their back garden.

It sounds like a cliché, but the trainers at Miguel's were extremely complimentary about Bronagh's ability, with one lamenting that she hadn't started younger. She has, they all agreed, a mean right hook.

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FULL CREDITS:

Directed by
Jonathan Harden

Written by
Bronágh Taggart

Produced by
Jonathan Harden
Bronágh Taggart
Séan A. Murray

Casting By
Robert Sterne

Cinematography by
Ryan Kernaghan

Film Editing by
Brian Philip Davis

Music by
Declan Gallen

Production Design by
John Leslie

Costume Design by
Cathy Prior

Cast

Katie - Bronágh Taggart
Kieran - Michael McElhatton
Geordie - Ian McElhinney
Auntie Mary - Carol Moore
Trainer - Mosa Kambule
Young Katie - Erin McMullan
Mum - Aisling McMullan

Boxers

Aran Condren, Daniel Carlin, Tiernan Duffy, Ben Ferran, Séan Ferran,
Patrick Graham, Peter Graham, Jake Hehir, Conor McCourt, Eoin McDonald,
Padraig Mooney, Conor Quinn, Aaron Sherry.

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Executive Producers

Salvador Briman
Kai Destiny
Anne DiDomenico

Dan Gabriel
Packy Lee
Michael Lennox
Michael McAdam

James Nesbitt
Mickey Raymond
Darryl Sloan

Makeup Designer - Sharon Watson
Assistant Makeup Artist - Alana Fraser

First Assistant Director - Ciaran Colton
Second Assistant Director - Ciara McIlraith
Third Assistant Director - Theo Herron
Trainee Assistant Directors - Anna Callan, Chloe Finlay
Production Runner - Elisha McNally

Script Supervisor - Marie Clare Cushinan

Stand-by Art Director - Gary Campbell
Stand-by Props - Jackson Todd
Trainee Props - Jonathan Collins
Costume Trainee- Jude Leonard

Production Sound Mixer - Derek Hehir
Boom Operator - Jonny Waite
Re-recording Mixer - Will McConnell

Stunt Coordinator - Joe Condren
Boxing Consultant - Mosa Kambule

1st Assistant Camera - Conor Rotherham
2nd Assistant Camera - Scott Mitchell
Clapper Loader - Cel Bothwell Fitzpatrick
Camera Trainee - Gerard McKee
Grip - Conor Kilpatrick
Data Wrangler - Arón Holden
Gaffer - David Bates

Still Photographer - Helen Sloan

Colorist - Jim Agnew
Assistant Editor - Lauren L'Estrange

Location Manager - Séan A. Murray
Location Production Assistant - Dwayne Douglas

Production Driver - David Orr

Indiegogo Publicist - Chris Robinson

Thanks

Conor Brady, Gerard Brown, Lynsey Carroll, Anthony Delaney, Jim Duffy, Steve Hillen, Maurice Jay, Séan Kelly, Martin McCann, Fergus McGrath, Orla McGrath, Bernard McMullan, Damien McMullan, Peter Morrison, Nuala Murphy, Ian Nugent, Hugh O'Halloran, Thomas Orr, Sasha Patterson, Alan Perry, Frankie Quinn, Jude Sharvin, Marty Stalker, Andrew Tohill, Ryan Tohill, Brona Whittaker.

Special Thanks

Gillian Anderson, Michael Conlan, Allan Cubitt, Jill Diamond, Kieran Doherty, Roger Fitzpatrick, Sally Harden, Stephen Hawthorne, Sven Hughes, Sinead Keenan, Raymond Lau, Jan Maloney, Niamh McGrady, Niall McGuckin, Maria Mulhall, Brendan Mullin, Nick Murphy, Liam Neeson, Derry O'Brien, Jessica Raine, Claire Robinson, Philip Rossiter, Phil Sheerin, Shauna Shivers, Paul Smith Jnr, Elaine Sperber, Catherine Staniforth, Carla Stronge, Jacob Thomas, David Torrains, Bronagh Waugh, Alastair Whatley, Zach Willis, Stanley Wynne, Philip Young.

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Additional Thanks

Antrim GAA, Belfast Sports & Spinal, Clonard ABC, Clonard Residents' Association, Hastings Hotels, Miguel's Boxing Gym, Shoot Communications, Two Design.

Equipment provided by

NI Camera Hire
Acorn Film & Video
Keylite Lighting Services

Trainees provided by Cinemagic

Post-Production provided by Ka-Boom

The producers wish to thank all those who supported 'Guard' via Indiegogo:

Alastair Whatley, Alexandra Wright, Alison McCrudden, Ally Travel, Amanda Morrow, Amanda Winters, Andrea Harkin, Andrew McAllister, Angela Terence & Adrian Rodrigues-Cova, Anne DiDomenico, Aron Holden, Barbara Burke, Bevin McCartan, Brenda McNeill, Cahir McDaid, Caitlin Joseph, Caolan Byrne, Caroline Cooke, Catharine Ashdown, Catherine Simmons, Catherine Staniforth, CC Shared Services, Chris Corbett, Chris Corrigan, Chris Jamison, Chris McGahey, Chris Millar, Chris Tester, Chris Woofenden & Jill Kennedy, Christian Roulleau, Christina Cunningham, Christine Morrow, Christoph Wagner, Ciara Bird, Cillian Donnelly, Clara Conan Layla Dunlop McBurney, Claudine Quinn, Colm Rea, Conor Brady, Conor McCrory, Dan Bullock, Dan Gabriel, Danny Nash, Daragh Carville, Darren Lee, Darryl Sloan, David Cleland, David Innes Edwards, David L. Gourdine, David Torrans, Dearvla Gorman & Chad Alexander, Denise McAvaney, Des Kennedy, Emma Cousins, Emma Little, Emma Lowndes, Fergus McGrath, Fiona Rooney, Florence Hall, Francis Mezza, Frankie Callaghan, Frankie Cooke, Gary Martin & Thora Martin, Gemma Keenan, George Lorimer, Georgie Grier, Gerard Monaco, Gerd Curley, Gillian Campbell, Gillian Magnall, Glen Matthews, Glen Wallace & Michelle Cash, Helen Sloan & Wren Rós Elliott-Sloan, Henry Rousso, Hilary Rea, Hugh Odling-Smee, Ian Nugent, Ilse Hendriksen, J Diamond, J Maloney, Jack Boswell, James Nesbitt, James Quigley, Jeffrey Currie, Jen Lavery, Jen Richardson, Jennifer Cleary, Jenny Ervine, Jenny Faulconbridge & Séan O'Reilly, Jerry Thompson, Jessica Odell, Jill Diamond, Joanbe Gillespie, Joanne Leetch, Joanne Savage, Joel Ormsby, John Chambers, John Leslie, Jolene O'Hara, Jonathan Taylor, Julian Stevens, Julie Eckford, Justin Binding, Kai Destiny, Karen Bell, Karen F Smith, Karen Hassan, Kathleen Cunningham, Kathryn McAuley, Keith Law, Keith Martin & Claire Martin, Keith O'Grady, Kevin LeFevour, Kieran Doherty, Kristin Tregar, Laura Howe, Lennin McClure, Lesa Gillespie, Lesley Ann Shaw, Lloyd Hutchinson, Lorcan Fox, Louise Harden & Ethan Paul Harden, Luke James, Maria Connolly, Marianne Harden, Mark Lunn, Mark Quinn, Martin Cattigan, Mary Durkan, Matthew Dudley, Maya Sondhi, Megan Greenwood, Melanie Nulf, Michael Byers, Michael Hooley, Michael MacBroom, Michael Melia, Michael Shelford, Michelle Coates, Mickey Raymond, Mike Allen, Miss Zoe Rainey, Monique Leather, Morag Keating, Mr Alastair Monk, Mr John Rainey, Mr Robert Tait, Nakay Kpaka, Natalie Easton, Neve O'Neill & Ryan O'Neill, Niall McGuckin, Niamh McGrady, Nicholas Waters, Nick Shaw, Nicola Keown, Noel Griffin, Nora Stillman Burke, Nuala Quinn, Orla McGrady, Patricia Gannon, Patty Woram, Paul Filby, Paul Kennedy, Paul Mallon, Paul Sloan, Paula-Jane Mc Mullan & Bella Mc Mullan Hawkey, Pauline Nixon, Peter Cooper, Phelim Kelly, Philip Hilditch, Philip Rossiter, Rachael Gordon, Rachel Murray, Ramona Milford, Richard Parkin, Rick Andrews & Conor Charlton, Rob Bailey & Carri Ward, Robbie Beggs, Roisin McCorry, Rosamund Monteith, Rosemary Busby, Ross Foley, Sally Harden, Sancha Fernandez-Vidler, Scott Cooper, Séan Bailey & Stacey Quigley, Séan Curran, Séan Kearns, Sebastian Hagedorn, Shea Hall, Shirine Young, Shirley Jones, Simon Barre-Brisebois, Simon Millar, Sonya Moorhead, Stanley Wynne, Stephanie Ried, Stephen & Lorna McCorkell, Stephen Daly, Stephen Fingleton, Stephen Hawthorne, Stephen Hollywood, Stuart Marshall, Suzanne Boreel, Sven Hughes, Team Three Days, Teresa Hill, Toby Jeffery & Nicola Karan, Tom Goodman-Hill, Trudi Coyne, Villi Ragnarsson, Zoe Castell & Rob Castell, Zuzana Klímová & Stephen Phillips.

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TECHINCAL INFORMATION:

Duration:	13:26	Shooting Format:	Pro Res (Arri Alexa)
Screening Format:	DCP	Country of Production:	Northern Ireland (UK, Ireland)
Aspect Ratio:	Scope	Production Company:	Honesty Inc Blick Studios 46 Hill Street Belfast BT1 2LB
Audio: Digital	Stereo		
B&W/Colour:	Colour		
Year of Production:	2017		