

THE IRISH FILM INSTITUTE

THE IRELAND FUNDS HELP TO GIVE AUDIENCES ACROSS THE WORLD
INSTANT ACCESS TO IRELAND'S MOVING IMAGE HERITAGE





THE IRISH FILM INSTITUTE **(IFI)** IS IRELAND'S NATIONAL CULTURAL INSTITUTION FOR FILM. IT PROVIDES AUDIENCES WITH ACCESS TO THE FINEST INDEPENDENT, IRISH AND INTERNATIONAL CINEMA; IT PRESERVES AND PROMOTES IRELAND'S MOVING IMAGE HERITAGE THROUGH THE IFI IRISH FILM ARCHIVE, AND PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR AUDIENCES OF ALL AGES AND BACKGROUNDS TO LEARN AND CRITICALLY ENGAGE WITH FILM.

A LIVING ARCHIVE

The IFI Irish Film Archive (part of the Irish Film Institute) collects, preserves and shares Ireland's national moving image collection, a diverse resource that chronicles over one hundred years of Irish achievement and experience. The Archive collection spans 1897 to the present day, and the cameras of filmmakers have captured the development of modern Ireland in a uniquely accessible manner. The most important social, political and historical events of the last century are represented, enabling audiences to explore the Irish cultural identity and connect with the past.

On any given day, the airy space that houses the Irish Film Institute is abuzz. Film-goers come in to catch a feature film or do research, the café is full of conversation and throughout the building archivists and technicians are meticulously restoring and preserving Ireland's cinematic history and treasures. The Institute is truly a treasure to the public, but until now was not able to extend its offering beyond the brick and mortar of its Temple Bar location.

THE IRISH FILM INSTITUTE PLAYER—NEW ACCESS TO A LIVING ARCHIVE

Most recently, The Ireland Funds provided a grant to help create the IFI Player. With a single click, visitors to The Irish Film Institute's website www.ifiplayer.ie can now enjoy a virtual viewing room of their remarkable collections, giving audiences across the globe instant access to this rich heritage. The material on the IFI Player has been selected to give audiences a taste of the breadth and depth of the collections preserved by the Archive. Home movies, newsreels, travelogues, animations, feature films, public information films and documentaries have been included as they have tried to reflect all aspects of indigenous amateur and professional production.

This project is the result of an extensive Digital Preservation and Access Strategy developed by the IFI. When the IFI Archive chooses titles for inclusion on the IFI Player there are a number of technical and practical considerations. In

addition to aiming to include a broad cross section of the material they preserve, they also have to clear each film with the relevant copyright holder and take into account any conservation issues. The material in IFI's collections goes through a long process of management, preservation and digitization before they are able to share it with the public. The final clip of film that audiences can access on the Player, is the result of months and even years of work by Archive staff. The IFI Player is a significant step for the IFI, as it truly democratizes access to their collections.

"The IFI relationship with The Ireland Funds goes back many years," says Ross Keane, Director of the Irish Film Institute. "We've been very grateful for the grant given to support the IFI Player, something that we've been working on for a long time. We have this vast and wonderful collection of material dating from 1897 to the current day. Feature films, documentaries, newsreel, amateur collections, so much material that we have showing Ireland's social, cultural and



Once Upon a Tram: 1960 A nostalgic trip along the beautiful Dublin coast, escaping the hustle and bustle of the city while enjoying the clatter and clang of the old Howth tram. This gentle film, directed by John Sarsfield and James Maguire and narrated by Cyril Cusack, records one of the last journeys of the Howth Tram, as it passes through the village, past the golf club and along the coast – a most elegant form of transport from a bygone era.

"WHAT WE'VE DEVELOPED WITH HELP FROM THE IRELAND FUNDS IS ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING THINGS I THINK THAT HAS COME OUT OF THE IFI IN MANY YEARS," REFLECTS ROSS. "IT'S ONE OF THOSE TRULY GROUNDBREAKING STEPS IN MAKING THIS HISTORIC MOVING IMAGE ARCHIVE ACCESSIBLE TO THE WORLD."



Portrait of Dublin: 1952 This short film was made for the Department of External Affairs' Cultural Relations Committee by filmmaker (later archivist) Liam O Laoghaire (aka Liam O'Leary). The film was designed to promote the city of Dublin to its inhabitants and to potential visitors from abroad.

political history. We really wanted a way to make that material accessible to people all around the world to get that real taste of Irish culture and Irish heritage. Visitors will find there are some really funny pieces and some moving pieces in there as well."

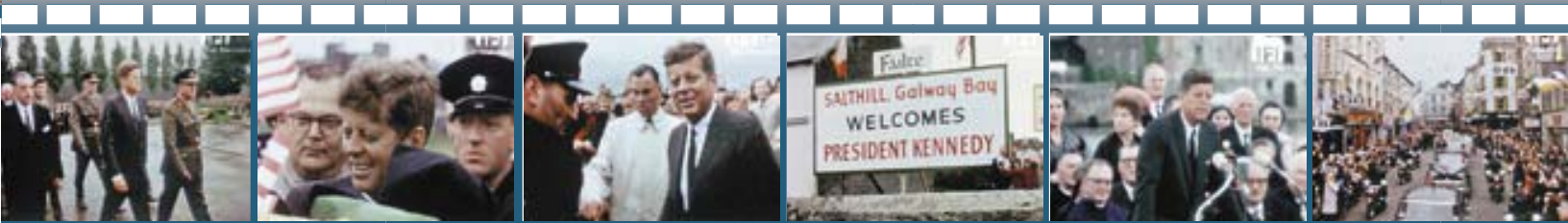
Visitors to the website can watch a wide variety of clips and films ranging from 5 minutes to over an hour. From footage of President John. F. Kennedy's historic visit to Ireland in 1963, produced by The Columban Fathers, to the now-humorous "Manners in Church" instructional feature produced by Radharc in 1962, glimpses into Irish life unfold.

REPATRIATING AND RESTORING— A GIFT TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

"We were fortunate enough to get some funding to 'repatriate' a large collection of historical news-reels from 1914 to 1924 that we identified a number of years ago as not being available to Irish audiences," explains Kasandra O'Connell, Head of the IFI Archive. "During that period, Ireland did not really have indigenous film production so an awful lot of what was recorded during that particularly historic part of Irish history was by American, French and British news-reel companies. We felt that it was really important that this representation of Irish history was available and held and preserved in Ireland. So we began conversations with British Pathé and with the British Film Institute who owned so much footage of this period."

Once the assessment began, it was discovered that the films were held on original nitrate film, a highly flammable material also prone to disintegration if not cared for. It became clear that the desired material hadn't been digitized to a high quality file format and so the IFI took a step back to see how they could first care for the footage. "It was a wonderful opportunity for us," says Kasandra. "At first it was about making this material accessible to the public, but now we could also put in the time to restore it and to ensure there was a really high quality digital copy for future generations. So that's the work that we're doing now." Over the coming months and years, this material, along with a host of other curated collections from the IFI Archive, will be released on the IFI Player allowing it to be enjoyed by a global audience for many years to come.

Go to www.ifoplayer.ie to discover more.



President John F. Kennedy's Visit to Ireland: 1963 This documentary film produced by the Columban Fathers chronicles President John F. Kennedy's historic visit to Ireland in June 1963, only 5 months before his tragic assassination. The producer, Fr Gerry Smith, a Cavan-born missionary priest had studied filmmaking in the U.S. and made a number of films about "the old country" before making this documentary which was intended to be shown at fundraising events for Irish-American audiences. There were several films made of the Kennedy visit, but his was the only professionally-made film shot in color.