



TOP JOB

Tigerlily Films wraps shoot on *First Communion Day*

Tigerlily Films has just completed a hectic 11-day shoot in Dublin and nearby seaside town Skerries to bring the 1999 Dennis Potter Play of the Year to BBC 2, writes Matthew Bell. The award, in memory of the late writer, aims to encourage writers whose work has not previously been produced as a full-length TV drama or film.

First Communion Day, written by experienced playwright Lin Coghlan, tells the story of seven-year-old Brian and his relationship with his dying grandmother and feckless mother. Director John Dower (above, left) has worked with Coghlan as an actor in theatre and, alongside producer and Tigerlily founder Natasha Dack, made the Locarno film festival award-winning short *Electric Frank* for BBC 2's *Brief Encounters*. 'We want to make films that are gritty but also tinged with a sense of hope, redemption and the importance of faith,' says Dower. 'The film is seen through the child's eyes but we also wanted to do justice to the other characters over the three generations of a family.'

The crew had to contend with a tight shooting schedule and the rainy Dublin weather. DoP Jake Polonsky (Merchant Ivory's *Cotton Mary*) says that although the rain created practical difficulties, it added to the hostile atmosphere of a wintry seaside town. 'We've tried to give it a cinematic, exciting feel so it's not just illustrating the script but creating a look which brings it to life,' he says.

Shane Bunting, who art directed *Eureka Street*, trained as a furniture designer and then worked for the BBC in Belfast. Bunting says the most tricky part of the shoot was the bluescreen composite shot where the mother knocks a hole in the bedroom wall and the camera follows her out to shoot a view of the sky over the sea. 'We couldn't knock a hole out of somebody's house,' explains Bunting, 'so we built a wooden wall which we plastered and wallpapered – and used bluescreen. It's just a cheat really.' The final digital shot was composited by Men in White Coats.

With casting finalised just before Christmas, costume designer Allison Byrne (RTE drama *Relative Strangers*) had only a week to get the costumes ready. 'Although it's set in modern Ireland we've tried to keep the feel rural, old-fashioned and eclectic to make it seem like a special world,' she explains.

First Communion Day is executive produced by Jenny Killick and is a 30-minute drama made by Tigerlily Films for BBC 2 through BBC films. It airs on BBC 2 at the end of March.