

## Drama was hot off the Press!

Written by Donald Fullarton

Monday, 26 November 2018 15:47 - Last Updated Friday, 30 November 2018 18:40

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THE REMARKABLE career of a former child acting star from Helensburgh took another step forward in September 2018.

It was the launch of the BBC newspaper drama series 'Press', directed by the highly regarded Tom Vaughan, and it came the day after his 49th birthday.

It is a far cry from his last big hit, the TV series 'Victoria' — but it was another major hit, more for its dramatic content perhaps than as an accurate reproduction of today's newspaper world, with little concession made to today's digital domination of the newsroom — and indeed much

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reduced staffing levels.

The first episode portrayed extremely well one huge touch of reality, the dreaded first 'death knock', when a reporter has to seek to interview parents after a fatality. It happens to almost every reporter, and it can be a nightmare.

The glossy and more exotic parts of the drama were a little foreign to today's weekly paper offices, but it had all the makings of a good story, in fact lots of them.

Tom had the difficult task of creating two different newspaper offices for national publications The Post and The Herald, which were both entirely fictional but believable.

The Post was a red-top tabloid and The Herald a broadsheet, and as Holly Evans (played by Charlotte Riley) and Duncan Allen (Ben Chaplin) fought for the best story, they needed suitable offices to work in.

At the launch for 'Press', Tom spoke about the difficulties of creating a believable world for the two newspapers in writer Mike Bartlett's scripts.

He said: "He gave me the challenge, it was two newspapers and it was important the audience knew which office we were in at any one point.

"One is bigger and shinier than the other, very deliberately. We went to every possible newspaper that would let us in and we tried to come up with two contrasting worlds.

"It was set in Central London and we found a square that had busses coming and going.

"You felt you had a sense of a big city life without making it picture-postcard — that was all part

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of the challenge.

“The location ended up in Clerkenwell, which is nice with the history of printing papers.”



It was all very different from Helensburgh where Tom, son of Peter and Sue Vaughan, lived for his first 17 years.

Tom, who lives with his wife Maggie and their three children in New Jersey, has confessed that he developed his love of film at the former La Scala Cinema in James Street, now the Logie Baird pub, and was particularly influenced by the original ‘Star Wars’ movie.

He said: “Realising that someone had directed it got me thinking about being a filmmaker. I can

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remember being eight or nine and shooting photos of my action man, GI Joe, as if they were in a movie.”

Educated at Hermitage Academy, he was a successful child actor who attended weekend acting classes at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow.

He had a supporting role in the [STV](#) children's series 'Stookie', but soon found that he preferred life behind the lens.

He said: “A friend of my dad had a video camera and we got hold of it and made our own stupid films. After I was in 'Stookie', I had just enough money to buy my own video camera and I made films all over Helensburgh.

“We would go behind the house and out on the playing fields and shoot comedies, war movies, anything really. We would even do our own stunts with people jumping from windows.

“It was mostly comedy, though, because we didn't have enough money to make serious films.

“The last ones I remember us doing were when we were old enough to drive. We did these car chase scenes, but we never got very far because the police kept stopping us!”

He left home to study drama at Bristol University, graduated with a BA in 1990, then moved to London to start making short films.

His first short 'Super Grass' won a distribution deal with Richard Linklater's movie 'Dazed and Confused' and played in theatres across the UK as well as at film festivals. It was bought by Film Four and shown on national TV.

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His next short film 'Box' caught the attention of the organisers of a Levi's sponsored short film competition, and his comedy 'Still Buzzin' became the first film made under this scheme and was shown at festivals around the world. It too won a theatrical distribution deal.

On the strength of 'Still Buzzin', ad agency St Luke's approached Tom to direct a short film they were producing as part of a campaign for BBC Radio 1.

The resulting film 'Plotless' was again shown at cinemas across the UK and the four TV spots shot as part of the production went on to win Tom a Creative Circle Award for best newcomer'.

Within a year of this achievement Tom had shot a brace of commercials and won a BTAA Gold Arrow for his 'Yellow Pages' commercial. Since then he has successfully balanced an incredibly busy commercials career — which includes campaigns for Boots, Sainsbury's, and Marks and Spencer — with his drama work.

His drama credits began with 'Cold Feet' (Granada/Channel 4), 'I Saw You' (Granada/ITV), 'Safe as Houses' (Granada/ITV), 'Final Demand' (BBC), and his first feature film 'Starter for Ten', starring James McAvoy, released in November 2006.

He was named by Campaign as one of the UK's 'Hottest Directors' and was selected as part of Saatchi & Saatchi's New Directors Showcase at Cannes. He also won a bronze lion at Cannes for his 'Coco De Mer' spots which he directed for Saatchi & Saatchi London.

When Tom directed the CBS Films medical drama 'Extraordinary Measures', starring Brendan Fraser and Harrison Ford, which was released in the United States in 2010. he was particularly pleased to work with Ford as 'Star Wars' had inspired him.

Other film credits include 'What happens in Vegas' for 20th Century Fox, an international hit comedy starring Cameron Diaz, Ashton Kutcher and Zach Galifianakis, and the romantic comedy 'Some Kind of Beautiful', starring Pierce Brosnan, Salma Hayek, Jessica Alba and Malcolm McDowell.

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TV credits include the hugely popular BAFTA-winning 'Victoria', starring Jenna Coleman, for ITV, and another BAFTA-winning drama, 'Doctor Foster', for BBC/Netflix, starring Suranne Jones and Bertie Carvel.

A contemporary revenge drama written by Mike Bartlett, 'Doctor Foster' was 2015's highest rated new drama in the UK.

Tom also directed two episodes, including the season finale, of 'The Son', an epic period drama based on a fictional Texan family, starring Pierce Brosnan.

Last summer he visited Napier University in Edinburgh and Glasgow's Royal Conservatoire of Scotland for masterclasses hosted by the Scottish Drama Training Network.

Tom spoke to students about his career and the challenges he faces as a director, comparing working on Hollywood blockbusters with his work on award-winning TV programmes.

In particular he talked about his work on 'Victoria', and students were shown exclusive clips which provided insight into the process of using visual effects post production and the importance of using storyboards to visualise ideas.

Dr Alistair Scott, who hosted the session at Napier, said: "Thank you so much to Tom for sharing his insights into working in high-quality film and television drama both in the UK and in the USA. It is always inspiring for students to get this kind of inside knowledge."

On another occasion Tom was asked what advice he would give to anyone wanting to follow in his footsteps and become a film director.

He replied: "Make films and videos whenever you can on any format available. Follow your

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instincts. Learn as much as you can about making films but work out how to do it yourself, your way.

“You really only learn by doing. Theory is fine, but practice is what it is all about. Never give up. Learn from life. Take time to observe the world.

“Love the reality of filmmaking or find something else to do with your life — there are many better ways to become rich or famous.”

Tom has a daughter from his first marriage, and she is now studying at an English university.