

## LOGLINE

An old man who was born on the road fights to keep moving with his travelling family circus.

## SYNOPSIS

Each year around the streets of towns and villages in Ireland, a voice crackles from a loudspeaker. It is the voice of Tom Duffy. He sits in his Mercedes while exotic girls in skimpy costumes hand out flyers. Time has changed the streets, the girls, even his body, but the message is still the same. The circus is in town.

Tom Duffy was born in Limavady in the back of a circus caravan in 1929. He has travelled the changing roads of Ireland with the circus ever since. Five generations of his family have done the same, stretching back to 1875 when the Duffy family formed its first circus. In 1979, along with his son David, Tom broke away from his brothers and formed the Tom Duffy circus. Now as Tom nears the end of his life, David and his sons Jamie (12) and Tom Jr. (15) carry on the family tradition.

The circus has been a constant presence in a country that has changed so much that it barely recognizes itself. A time machine of sorts that has survived passing through Independence, Civil War, World Wars, economic hardship and foot and mouth. In Tom's early days, when entertainment was scarce, the circus would be met by a cheering crowd and escorted into town. Now in our age of abundance and technology, the internet, games systems and cheap holidays vie with the circus for audience attention.

This film will show a man fighting an aging body to keep travelling with the circus that he created, while this circus fights its own battle with a changing world.

## CIRCUS MAN - SCRIPT

**Circus Performance s**            **COLOUR**  
**All Other Scenes**                **BLACK & WHITE**

### 1 EXT: CU Track - following end of walking stick - B&W

The end of a walking stick digs into the ground beneath gravel stones. The body it assists can be heard shuffling and its feet send stones scuttling out of the way. The shadow of the body sweeps back and forward across the stick.

### 2 EXT: WS - On a small road below a motorway – B&W

A motorway rises above the fields and the horizon. Cars speed past but only their sound can be heard. Cows graze in the fields undisturbed. Posters hang on the electricity poles that are too far away to read.

### 3 EXT: WS - Irish Village Main Street – B&W

New apartment blocks tower over small bungalows that come from another age. The cars that roam the streets seem as alien to this rural village as the apartment blocks. Posters hang on lampposts with an arrow pointing directions. Echoing in the streets is the distant sound of a voice floating out of a loudspeaker. It is the voice of a man.

### 4 EXT: CU Track - on hand pushing down on walking stick – B&W

Hairs on an old man's hand curl over his wrinkles like his fingers curl over the top of the walking stick. His hand creases as it takes the weight of his body. Gravel crackling and crunching under feet is the only sound.

### 5 EXT: LA MS - Circus poster on pole – B&W

The poster reads "TOM DUFFY's CIRCUS". A clown points straight out from the poster, urging people who look at it to follow the arrow. The clown is surrounded by tigers, horses and a lady who carries a snake on her shoulders. Some wispy white clouds float behind the poster. A light wind shakes the poster every once in a while.

### 6 EXT/INT: TRACK - following man through Circus – B&W

Tom's head fills the frame. He struggles with his left side. A walking stick, although it cannot be seen, holds him from falling. He walks through the circus ground. People work around him as he moves. Makeshift clotheslines connect caravans. Cages hold tigers and lions. A big marquee holds aloft the name "TOM DUFFY". Tom walks through a dark tunnel. Inside, the Big Top opens out in front of him. Banks of seats are empty each side of him. Tom walks away from camera and into the ring. Tom turns to face the camera and speaks.

*" In 1929 I was born in a circus caravan, ever since I have travelled the highways and bi-ways of this country. Now I am an old man, my son and*



Tom talks of his family lineage, that they have been travelling the country since 1875.

12 INT: CU TRACK – David in the ring - COLOUR

Slow motion. David projects his opening address into the air. The camera turns over the round features of his face. He turns side to side. The shadow cast by his top hat rests just above his eyes. His sound is not heard.

13 EXT: Portrait montage – Circus Ground - B&W

A mother stands looking at camera. There are four kids with her. She tries to keep them looking straight ahead but there are other distractions. One of her boys tries to walk away, his attention caught by something bright and wonderful. The mother drags him back by the hood on his jacket. She whispers in his ear and points straight ahead to the camera. A closed mouth smile hides her gritted teeth. Behind her lines of people are queuing to enter the circus.

Tom's voice talks about the essence of circus, what it does to an audience, its place in society , how it entertains....

*It annoys me when people dismiss the circus as kids entertainment,  
This is not bloody playschool, these performers are not Blue Peter presenters  
and my family are not babysitters. What we're doing here is something  
bigger. It's about magic, art, craft, athleticism, drama with a hint of spice.  
The girls are the spice, they add a touch of glamour, eroticism even.  
There is something for kids, teenagers, mam, dad even old folk like myself...*

A teenage couple hold hands. Their bond is nervous. The boys hand slips from her grasp and he puts it into his pocket. She looks at him. Getting no reaction she turns back and folds her hand. Behind them, groups of people pass on their way to the circus. Posters line the poles in the background.

A gentleman's family huddles under an umbrella. Mum, Dad, little boy and little girl. The muddy puddles around them seem to boil. It is raining heavily. Their shiny wellies are splattered with muck. Behind them people run for shelter, splashing as they go. The family turns from the camera and run towards shelter.

A middle-aged man in a short sleeved T-shirt stands with a well thumbed broadsheet newspaper clasped between his desktop bicep and his bony body. His smile is one of a beautiful summers day. Behind him the marquee, the Big Top, looms large. It is a world of possibility.

Tom talks of this world of possibility.

*When you walk into the big top, the smell, the sound, the taste in you mouth,  
anything can happen, anything is possible. When you enter that tent, you  
enter a different world. A world....*

14 INT: WS Track – Into Big Top – B&W

Flickers of light invade the darkness. Shadows big and small move forward. The canvas is pulled back, the camera moves forward with the shadows and the empty ring full of light, smoke and promise appears. Shadows big and small move in left and right.

15 INT: MONTAGE – BIG TOP – B&W and COLOUR

B&W

A little girl with a head full of curls munches into a big cloud of fluff. Behind her, others buy candy floss while in front of her people move to their seats. She turns to camera and munches the floss with a huge grin on her face.

COLOUR

Julio Marquez is a young Mexican performer. He performs with a cheeky grin on his face and a movement in his hips that only Latin blood can facilitate. He juggles balls, pins, ping pong balls with his mouth and Mexican hats all while smiling and shaking.

B&W

Faces big and small, old and young smile and laugh. The light from the ring rises and falls on their features.

COLOUR

The Corps de Ballet Russian Dance troupe move forward in a Moulin Rouge style dance. They strut, pout and pirouette in minimal costumes.

B&W

The gentleman of the Gentleman's family vision is firmly fixed on the dancing ladies. The gentleman's wife's vision is firmly fixed on the gentleman.

COLOUR

Miss Tamara spins on a cube in the air. Her limbs cut the darkness in gymnastic shapes.

B&W

Little kids at ringside sit still, their little necks arched upwards and their mouths wide open. To them this flying girl is an angel princess.

16 INT: WS – Morrocan workers caravan – B&W

The caravan is unadorned. It is basic and somewhat cramped. Light seems to struggle in the small windows. On the ground two Morrocan workers kneel to pray.

*Allah u Ackbar*

They stand up at the ends of their mats. Their heads almost touch the roof.

*Allah u Ackbar*

They kneel again, their heads to the ground.

17 INT: MS – Big Top stands – B&W

Tom sits back in the centre of a row of uniform plastic seats. Empty plastic seats to his left and right, in front and behind. His walking stick is his only companion. It rests on the seat to his right.

He talks of the nationalities of the workers.

*“They come from all over, it’s like the United Nations.  
They come from Poland, Morocco, Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Uzbekistan,  
Columbia, India, England and the Duffy’s from Ireland. We don’t have any  
Irish working for us any more, we used but they all left in the middle of the night,  
the work was too hard for them.”*

He talks of all the families that travel with the circus

*The Yakubov Troupe are a father, son and daughter act, Los Marinos  
are a father and son combination with the sons partner involved.  
Tommy Chipperfield is 7<sup>th</sup> generation circus. He travels with his wife and son.  
The Chipperfields have traveled with us for years looking after our animals.  
Then there is our clown family, David Konyot, his wife Annamaria and daughter Lilly.*

Tom talks about how all the families travel and work together and how things can go bad sometimes.

18 INT: Portrait Montage – Workers caravans – B&W

Four Russian drivers whose frames announce that they have worked hard all their lives share a room. Through a door they gaze from two bunk beds. The space between them is only enough for one of them to stand.

The Konyot clown family sit in a colourful caravan that is decorated eclectically. Chelsea posters cover one wall and a framed blue Chelsea shirt emblazoned with “Terry” is on another. J.K Rowling books fill a shelf. There is a table of family photos. The photos are mainly of Annamaria’s family in Russia.

The Duffy family caravan is full of modern comforts. An entertainment system with a 42 inch widescreen TV as its centerpiece. Laptop with internet access on the dinner table. One of the walls displays framed clippings of David and Stephanie’s wedding photos from VIP magazine. David sits in an armchair that has adapted over time to suit his ample frame. His wife Stephanie stands in the kitchen surrounded by steaming pots. Tom Jr.(15) sits behind the laptop. Jamie (12) sits on the sofa nestled in an oversized Liverpool top that may never be filled by his small body.

19 EXT: WS Portrait – Street in a rural town – B&W

Tom stands, leaning against his gold Mercedes. On his left 2 girls stand. Kneeling in front of him to his left are two more girls and another, Miss Tamara, is stretched out on the bonnet of the car. The girls are from the Corps de Ballet Troupe. They wear white hot

pants and white corsets. Their hands are stretched out in display. Tom's hands lean on the walking stick in front of him.

20 EXT: MWS – Tom in Car on street – B&W

Tom sits in the driving seat of his Mercedes. The only passenger is his walking stick in the seat next to him. On the roof of the car a loudspeaker is strapped.

Tom talks about the circus being like a time machine. It has been a constant in the history of Ireland over the past 133 years. The history of the country through which it has moved has changed considerably. Memories and stories of this time span travel with the circus in the hearts and minds of the Duffy family.

*“My mother used to tell us a story about how the Black and Tans would raid the circus during the War of Independence. Time and time again they came and stole our takings. My mother copped on to this and one evening when they raided, she tossed all the money, coins in those days, into the oven. If the bastards wanted the money they were going to roast their hands in the process.”*

Civil war, economic frailty, foot and mouth, immigration laws, the Emergency, the Troubles... all have left their mark and their stories on the circus. These stories are alive in Tom and he recalls them-

*“Through all of this we have kept going and we'll keep going because it's all we know. It's in our blood.”*

21 EXT: WS – Main Street in a quiet rural town – B&W

Defiant old houses, towering new apartments, a Chinese take-away and a greasy spoon cafeteria line the main street of a quiet rural village. It looks like election time, there are so many circus posters holding onto the lampposts. The street is empty. Up the road comes the distant sound of a voice floating from a loudspeaker. It is the voice of a man. It gets closer.

*“Roll up , Roll up the circus is in town, Duffy's Circus presents “the Journey”  
A show that takes you back over 130 years of the Duffy's circus in Ireland.  
We've got Lions, Tigers, Llamas, snakes, crocodiles, horses and dogs.  
We have Los Marinos an acrobat troupe from Columbia,  
Yakubov Troupe from Uzbekistan and Russian dancers.  
Duffy's, Circus as it should be.”*

Tom drives up the main street, shouting out through the loudspeaker. Miss Tamara leads him and he is flanked on both sides by dancing girls in their skimpy white outfits.

Builders come out of the greasy spoon café to look, ladies with rollers in their hair appear from salons to glare, children run from their school to get flyers from the girls.

22 EXT: WS TRACK – Anfield Park, Navan - Navan

It is the off-season. From November until February the Duffy family and the circus animals reside on a piece of land they call Anfield Park. The Duffys are committed Liverpool fans. The trees are bare and the skies grey. A slight mist sits on the land. Tom leaning on his walking stick walks past animal cages. He stops at the edge of the land and leans on his stick in front of him. Behind him are the cages and the Duffy's house. Only birdsong breaks the silence.

Tom talks about the Road, about Home.

*“Towards the end of the season I can't wait to get home and rest, not to be moving seems like heaven. I'm only here a week and the road calls me in my dreams. I was born on the road, I can't be in one place for too long, it's not restlessness, I just need to move, keep going forward. The world always seems around the next corner.”*

He talks of Love on the road, of meeting his wife Greta, how his son David met his wife Stephanie on the road.

*“It's a special type of woman that will marry a circus man, I think you've got to be born of the road to understand...”*

23 INT: MS – Caravan at night – B&W

Tom and Greta sit facing each other. They are eating dinner. The night darkness is broken by a lamp on their table. The silence is broken only by the constant hum of the generator. They eat in a comfortable silence.

24 INT: WS – Big Top Stands- B&W

Tom sits alone in the stands, plastic seats and walking stick his only company. The glow of the ring touches his smile.

He talks of the future. He talks of how his grandsons are learning the ways of the circus. He talks of the challenges the circus faces for the future

*“In my day when we pulled into a town, we would be met at the town boundary and escorted into town by crowds of people, young and old. There would be great cheering, music and dancing. In some of these places our circus would be the only entertainment from the time we left town until the time we came back again. The tent would heave with the crowds. Now people have cinemas, TV's, the internet. Nowadays kids are bloody walking round with movies in their pockets... That's what the circus is up against.”*



25 INT: Various Shots – Ring – COLOUR

Tom's grandsons Tom Jr. and Jamie circle the ring. They stand on their horse Spirit's back, arms aloft. Tom Jr. hangs upside down from the horse. His hands touch the saw dust of the ring. A spotlight follows them round and around.

Tom talks of leaving his circus behind to his son and grandsons.

*“David is my only child and in the past I have worried about leaving him behind alone with the circus but when I see my grandsons learning and performing new tricks, when I see how they manage the workers, I stop worrying. It has been in this family for so many generations, it's seeped into the DNA. We're a circus family and when I'm gone the Duffy's will still be a circus family.”*

26 INT: HA WS – Ring – B&W

The Big Top is empty. The ring is filled with light. Tom stands alone in the ring leaning on his walking stick. He is looking upwards towards the camera.

27 EXT: CU Track - on hand pushing down on walking stick – B&W

The hairs on Tom's hand curl over his wrinkles like his fingers curl over the top of his walking stick. His hand creases at it takes the weight of his body. The sound of gravel under feet is the only sound.

28 EXT: WS – Hill above city – B&W

A lone Duffy's poster flaps in the wind. The cable ties struggle to resist the wind. Below in the background a big city spreads out across a valley. Blowing on the wind is the distant sound of a voice floating out of a loudspeaker. It is the voice of a man.