

An emotional roller-coaster

NOEL GRIMA

Mark Magro is a first-generation Canadian born and raised in Toronto to a father who was born in Malta.

On Friday he presents his new half-hour film, 'Reflections in the Emerald Isle', a personal exploration of the Irish landscape while reflecting on the life of a man who would become his Maltese father, a film described as rich in metaphor, history and emotion.

The film will be showcased at the 2013 Kinemastik International film festival being held in Malta and will be shown on 26 and 27 July at St Lazarus Curtain, Valletta. Doors open at 8.30pm and the event starts at 9.15pm.

Mr Magro explains: "Ireland has been a melancholy place to me. I have always found myself there at points of emotional turmoil. I wanted to combine how I felt over the course of developing this project alongside the knowledge I accumulated in the field of filmmaking."

"Reflections in the Emerald Isle is an exploration of a country through the eyes of a young man as he examines his father."

"My fascination with Ireland began back in 2008. I had travelled to Ireland then on vacation with my girlfriend where we cycled the countryside. The relationship was going downhill and my memories of the trip were terrible. By the end of the voyage, I was an emotional wreck."

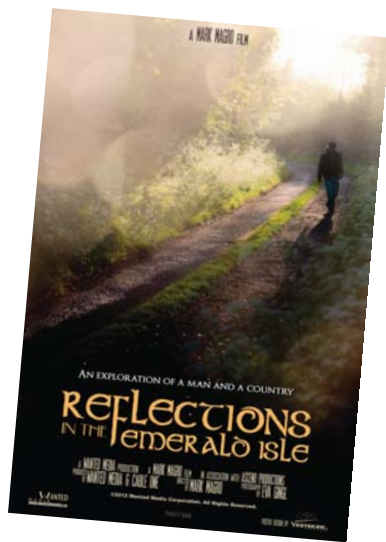
"After my trip to Ireland, I had the opportunity to visit my parent's motherland of Malta with my entire family. It would be the last time we would all be there together as a family unit. When I arrived back home, I learned of the shocking news that my girlfriend was going to leave me for a man back in Ireland. I wanted her back and so the concept of this project was born."

However, he had a hard time finding people interested in his project. Then, in the winter of 2009 he met Eva Gingl, who owned a cable company and who was looking for staff to teach and produce media for broadcast.

"It was around this time that my father became ill. He was in intensive care at the hospital and work became for me a way to deal with the intense emotions."

"I allocated one month to film in Ireland. A camper was booked to maximize filming opportunities. Locations were painstakingly researched and then mapped out to formulate a road trip taking me across Ireland."

"I visited my father in the hospi-



tal before I left for Ireland. What I did not know then was that this would be the last time we talked. I remember holding his hand and telling him I would see him soon.

"The locations explored were majestic. I was often speechless and wondered how everything would fall into place. I was physically and emotionally exhausted but excited to begin the task of piecing it together."

"From Ireland we traveled to Scotland to film additional footage for Cable One. While in Europe, I took some time to visit my family in Malta. It was the first time I was there completely alone."

"With each phone call to my mother, I realized my father was losing his fight to stay alive. As I sat near his older brother in the house my father grew up in, I felt scared. I booked an early flight back home."

"The day after I arrived back home, my father died. I was devastated. After the funeral, the Ireland project helped me deal with the loss. It was here that I decided that this was going to be a film of personal reflection, rather than a historical documentary. I would tell the story of my father's life



A production still from the filming in Ireland
Photograph: Eva Gingl



Three photos of Mr Magro's father with his brother at their family home in Grendi



and Ireland's landscape as it relates to how I felt at the time of filming.

"I hope this project will inspire people to understand the importance of our parents, especially fathers, in our lives. Some may be distant or estranged, but they are a part of us."

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