

Belfast premiere for SIAD trio's black comedy

A FILM made by a team including two Surrey Institute of Art and Design graduates is to premiere at the Belfast Film Festival.

Crashing the Wake, which was shot in October last year, has been entered into the Kodak short film category at the festival and will compete alongside 24 other shorts for a cash prize.

Crashing the Wake is a Northern Irish black comedy which centres around the morbidly amusing events at an open wake, becoming a poignantly observed study of the nature of death and the father-son relationship.

It was co-written and directed by two Surrey Institute film graduates, Chris Baugh and Arnstein Dybvik, and produced by the London-based founder of Intense Productions, Chee Keong Cheung.

The 22-year-old film maker, Chris Baugh, originates from Omagh, in Northern Ireland, and shot the film on location there.

He co-wrote the screenplay as a darkly comic study on the nature of Northern Irish humour and says that part of the joy of its premiere screening being in his home country will be to gauge a local audience's response to his work.

Mr Baugh is expecting a warm reaction: "I think it will

By Michael Wylie-Harris

play out well in front of the Northern Irish audiences as it contains lots of black comedy, which is inherent in their humour."

His co-writer and director, Norwegian-born Arnstein Dybvik, is, however, keen to stress the fact that, despite the Irish backdrop, the themes within the film remain universal, and will transcend different cultures - being equally affecting to a range of audiences, irrespective of their nationality.

He said: "The film does concentrate on Irish culture, but its themes, that of family relationships and death, will be understood by everyone."

The Belfast Film Festival has become a fast growing institution and this year is the biggest yet.

The team behind *Crashing the Wake* see their entry into the festival as a key opportunity to make industry connections, showcase their talent and develop and build on industry relationships.

The film's producer, Chee Keong Cheung, is aware of the kudos that will go with winning the award, but remains philosophical about the main drive behind film-making: "Of course it will help in the future to be known as award-winning

film makers.

"However, when Chris and Olsen began on the project it was about passion for telling a story, not about financial gain."

He is also very proud of the way that the film managed to draw upon the local talent and resources in Omagh, where it was shot.

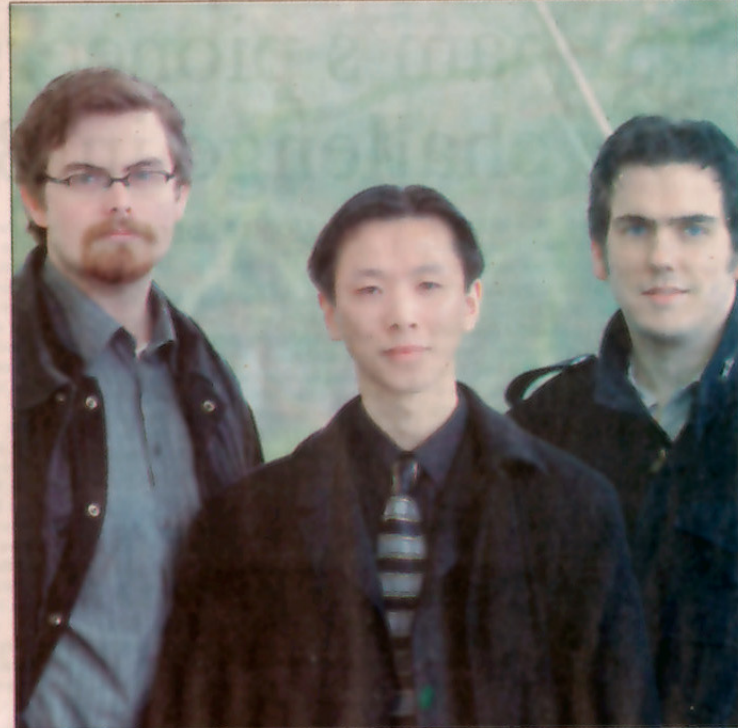
He added: "What was so great about the project was the way that it managed to give something back to the local community.

"It was partly funded by the local Omagh council and we had people helping out from the nearby technical college. On the final day of the shoot we had around 100 extras who were all locals, too."

The Belfast Film Festival will take place between March 25 and April 2, and further public screenings of will be held in Omagh in April after the festival.

Chris Baugh and Arnstein Dybvik are currently working on a series of new projects, including a screenplay for a feature film which they will also co-write and direct.

Chris Baugh said: "I think we've got as good a chance as any as winning the award at the festival. Irrespective of whether we win or not, though, it will be nice for people to see all the effort that has gone in to the project."



Film-makers Arnstein Dybvik, Chee Keong Cheung and Chris Baugh. (FD12-36-04)