

The 1st ZeBBies Report

*An examination of writing for film, radio, theatre and television in
Ireland in the twelve month period from mid 2006 to mid 2007.*

July 2008



The 1st ZeBBies Report

Introduction

The ZeBBies are an annual award established by the Irish Playwrights' and Screenwriters' Guild to celebrate writing in film, television, theatre and radio in Ireland.

As part of the process to seek nominations, the Guild publishes a full list of every production in a twelve month period in the four categories listed above which had a credited writer. The production had to be fiction, written by an Irish writer or a writer normally resident in Ireland and available to an Irish audience in the twelve month period between 1st July 2006 and 30th June 2007.

This list makes possible the additional opportunity of examining what has been written from an analytical or statistical perspective.

This brief document shows all of the information that we believe we can conclude from examining the list of what was produced and developed in the period.

Of course, the information here is the best we can acquire and in some instances we have had to make best

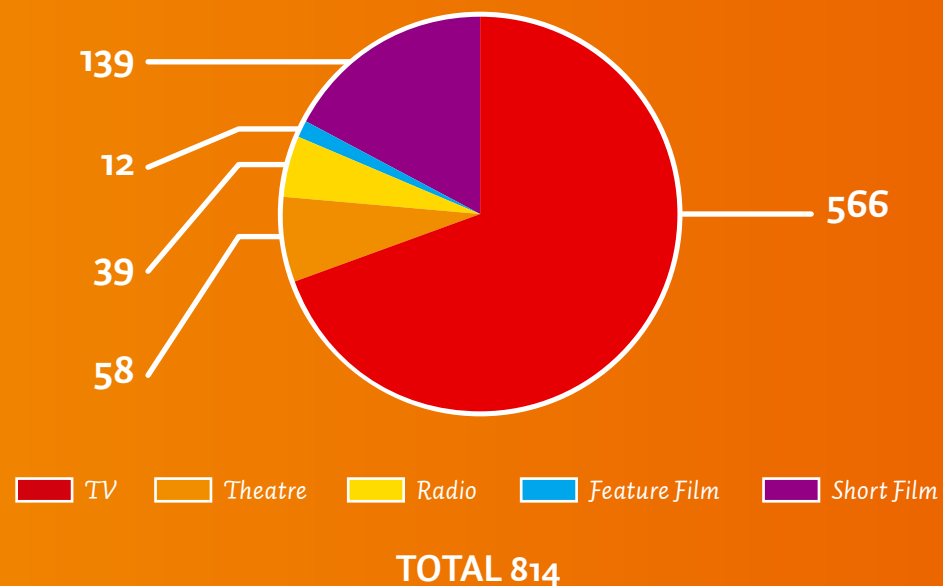
estimates. Additionally this information relates to one year only and we are aware that we should not draw over-emphatic conclusions on the basis of one year.

Nonetheless, taking these cautions into account we believe that the information is of sufficient interest to be published, and should, if not provoke any new debates or discussion, at least allow that existing discussions will be based to some degree on real information rather than mere supposition, and act as a base for further analysis in future years.

In assembling the list we got considerable help from many individuals, whom we thank, but the errors and mistakes, which we are sure exist, are ours alone.

AUDREY O'REILLY
Chairwoman

NUMBER OF CREDITED PROJECTS PRODUCED IN EACH CATEGORY



How much paid writing is being done in Ireland?

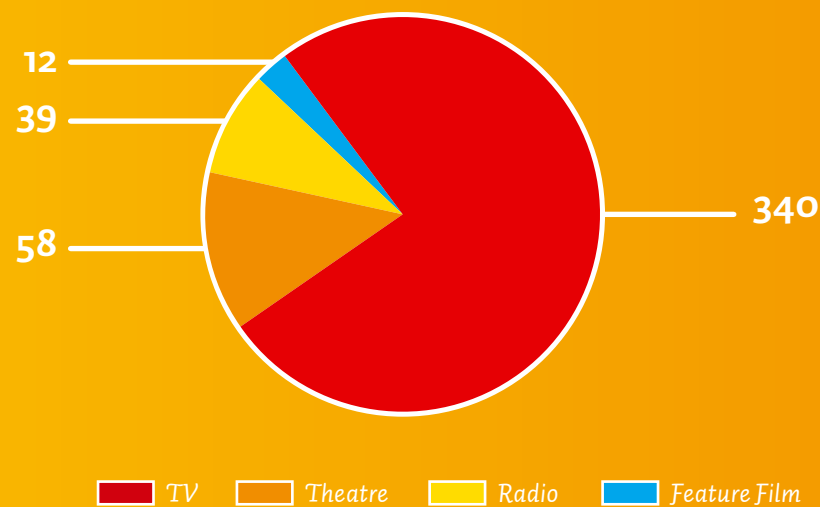
In the twelve month period under review 814 productions with writers credits were produced. We expect that there are some errors or inadequacies in the list and are happy to be told of any productions which should be included in or excluded from the overall list. The full list is available on our website at: www.script.ie/zebbies-nominations.php.

Our view would be that the list is as accurate as possible and is unlikely to be substantially incorrect.

We have separated feature length film and short films. As the number of short films is so high (139), their combination with feature length films would not be logical.

The total number of credited productions in the twelve month period was 814. As the accompanying chart demonstrates, the largest area of production of performed drama in Ireland is television, the smallest (in volume) is feature film.

NUMBER OF PROJECTS PRODUCED IN EACH CATEGORY OF +25 MINUTES DURATION.



TOTAL 449

Short productions and long productions

However the figure of 814 credited productions gives a somewhat artificial picture. 139 of those, for example, are short films, many of those being student films. So far as we can judge writers on those short films are rarely paid and in consequence to include them in our analysis would give an artificially distorted picture of the incomes of writers and volumes of production. Likewise, the inclusion of children's animation or short stories would distort the overall statistics.

Consequently we looked again at all of the 814 credited productions and withdrew everything under a television half hour in length. As can be seen from the following chart, this severely reduces the number of productions – principally in television (largely by the removal of animation and short stories for children) and in film (by the removal of shorts). The number in radio and theatre remains unaffected by this change.

The total number of credited productions of a half-hour or more is 449, but television still remains the largest in volume and feature film the smallest.

Adding in projects in development

Of course, if the intention is to examine all paid projects that writers are involved in, then produced projects are not the total. One has to include projects in development in the list. We define 'in development' as meaning put into paid development in the year under review.

This is a more inexact count than the number of credited productions for a variety of reasons. Firstly there are those projects being written on spec (i.e. where the writer is writing the project unpaid and uncontracted in the hope of being able to sell it once written). We have not made any attempt to include those as a) we can think of no possible way to count them, b) it would not be possible to judge whether projects commenced would be completed and c) as the writers of spec scripts are not being paid for their work, their inclusion would have a distorting effect on calculations of income.

Counting those projects in development where the development is funded is easier but still subject to some questions which make it difficult for us to be precise about the volume of work in this category. Firstly, being under contract does not mean that there is any active work being

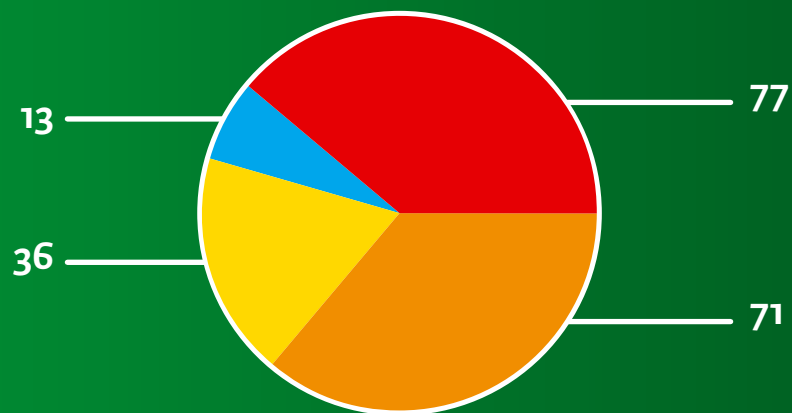
undertaken to develop the script. Producers sometimes claim to have as many projects in active development as they can – hence their insistence on longer option agreements.

Included in our calculation of projects in development then are a) every project put into active development in the year in question funded by the Film Board b) theatre projects supported by the Arts Council's commissioning schemes, c) a calculation of work in development with the IPU in RTE based on their annual reports, d) information from the Media Desks, e) information from various theatre companies and g) and guesstimates of work in development funded directly by producers, theatre companies etc. based on conversations with a sample of them.

The calculation of number of projects in development is subject to many variables and absent statistics so it may be inaccurate to some degree.

In our calculation the number of projects either produced or in paid development in the year under review is 930.

NUMBER OF WRITERS WITH PRODUCED PROJECTS OF +25 MINUTES IN EACH CATEGORY



TV Theatre Radio Feature Film

TOTAL 189
(8 WRITERS APPEAR IN MORE THAN ONE CATEGORY)

How many writers had their work produced?

Looking at the 449 projects which were credited productions over a television half hour, these were written by 189 writers.

If the episodes of the long-running series and their writers are removed from this calculation, this means that the remaining writers averaged 1.2 paid projects in the year.

In theatre (and in film, though only by one writer) the number of writers is greater than the number of productions. This reflects a number of projects in theatre where a number of writers write one production.

How many writers had their work produced and/or developed?

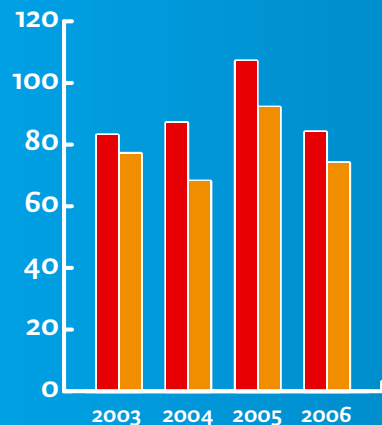
Adding the writers who developed their work to the 189 who produced work involves more educated guesswork than any other calculation in this document and should be treated as such.

While we are certain of the writers funded in development by the Film Board for the First Draft Loan and Project Development schemes, we are not certain of the situation with regard to projects funded under either the old or the new slate funding scheme. The numbers of projects which were in development in RTE is measurable but we are not certain of the exact number of writers involved. And while we know some of the writers who were working on writing as-yet-unproduced plays we probably do not know all. Our calculation of the number of writers who undertook paid work (either to write projects being developed or to write projects produced in the year) in the twelve months under review is therefore not as accurate as we would wish.

However the very large number of writers involved who have only undertaken work in development and have no credited production in the year is somewhat surprising and is elaborated upon below.

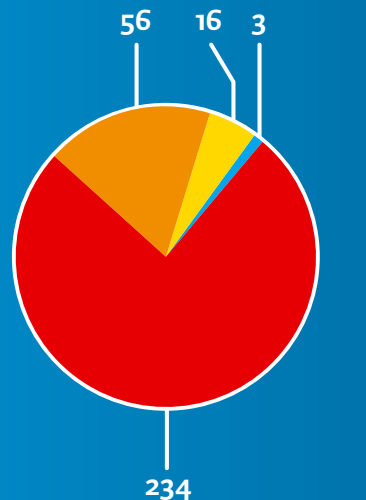
In our calculation, the number of writers who had their work produced and/or developed in the year under review is 279.

NUMBER OF FILM BOARD DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS/WRITERS



Projects Writers

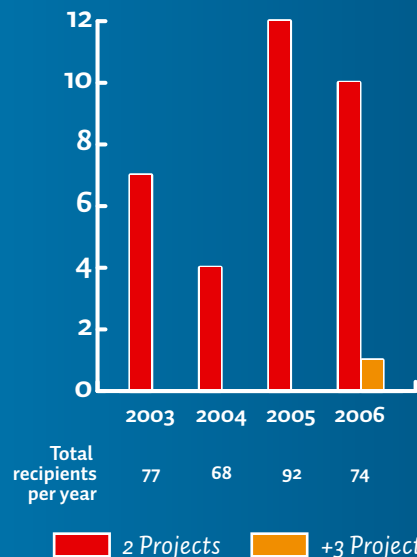
RECIPIENTS OF FILM BOARD DEVELOPMENT FINANCE OVER THE PERIOD 2003 – 2006



In 1 year In 2 years
In 3 years In all 4 years

Between Jan 2003 and Dec 2006, 309 writers received development finance for 361 projects (56 of whom received money in two different years etc.)

MULTIPLE FILM BOARD DEVELOPMENT*



Total recipients per year
77 68 92 74

2 Projects +3 Projects

*Number of writers who received more than one allotment of Film Board Development finance within each year.

Number of writers who worked only in development

The number of writers contracted to develop projects is not as easy to establish as those who wrote produced work. However in respect of the Irish Film Board's First Draft Feature Loan system and the Project Development scheme, the numbers are precisely known and it is therefore clear from an examination of these figures that **in the twelve month period under review, 65 of the 77 writers (or 85%) who had projects in development funded by the Irish Film Board were writers who had no credits for produced work in any area in the same year.**

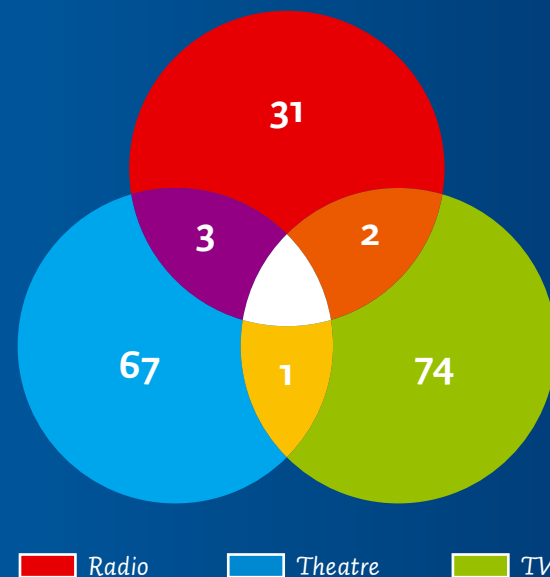
To try to examine this phenomenon further we looked back over a four year period of the work of the Board in respect of the two schemes referred to above to see the frequency with which writers are funded by the Board's schemes and were surprised to discover that the vast majority of writers who were funded by the Board were funded once only and do not reappear in future years.

During the period Jan 2003 – Dec 2006, the Board funded 309 individual writers, who had a combined total of 361 projects.

This means that 56 writers were funded in two out of those four years; 16 in three of those years and only 3 in all four of those years.

75% of writers who received development funding from the Board in this four-year period received funding only once.

NUMBER OF WRITERS WHO PRODUCED PROJECTS OF +25 MINUTES IN EACH CATEGORY SHOWING THE OVERLAP



Note: With regards to feature film only one writer wrote in both radio and feature film and one in both television and feature film.

Writing in more than one category

A surprising conclusion of an examination of the numbers of writers in each category of writing is the very limited extent to which writers overlap from one area to another.

However this is an extension of the fact that most produced writers are only writing two or less credited productions per year, and most writers in development are only earning a writing income from their development work. The real extent to which writers overlap different areas of writing will only become available in detail over a number of years of collecting and analysing the figures (in other words writers may be writing for television one year and the theatre or radio the next) but in the interim the very limited extent to which writers overlapped areas of writing in the year under review suggests that this practice is considerably less frequent than we had thought (and may imply a need for specialised training which would encourage more transfer of creativity across the barriers of knowledge and experience in the different areas).

Gender representation

A number of questions arise in examining the under-representation of women in the statistics for the year we have examined.

Of the 189 writers with credits on produced work in the year under review, 76 (42%) are women.

This percentage is considerably better than that reported by the Writers Guild of America for the United States industry in 2007 where the percentage of women working in film and television as writers is reported as 25%. (www.wga.org/uploadedFiles/who_we_are/HWR07.pdf).

However when the figures are broken down the differences with the United States is considerable. The WGA reports that 27% of writers in television are women and 19% in film are women. In our figures more than 50% of television in Ireland is written by women but the involvement of women in film is lower than the US figures.

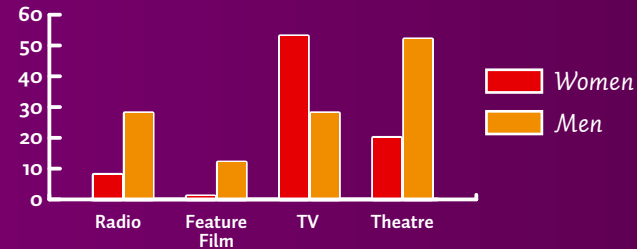
Figures from the United Kingdom state that 53% of those who report their main occupation as writing are women but only 26% of those who say they write film are women and only 15% of films have credited women writers. (www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/media/pdf/4/r/0415women_screen_-_FINAL_09.o6.o6.pdf).

As demonstrated in this report, **the percentage of women writing feature films in development in Ireland is about 20% per annum and credits on produced films are less than 10%.**

We have looked at this question from two other perspectives.

Firstly we have broken the overall figure into the four categories of work.

GENDER BREAKDOWN OF PRODUCED PROJECTS OF +25

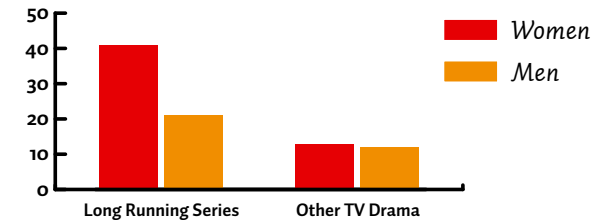


Note: 7 men and 1 woman overlap two categories.

This shows that women writers are better represented in produced television than in feature film made in this year.

Taking this one step further it's clear that women writers are in a substantial majority in the writing of long-running series (Fair City and Ros na Run).

GENDER BREAKDOWN OF PRODUCED TELEVISION DRAMA OF +25

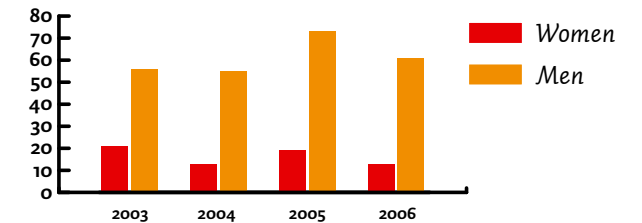


Note: To represent the ratio in each case, writers who wrote in both categories appear here in each category.

Women are least well represented in produced feature film, with only one in twelve in the year under review written by a woman.

Relating this to projects in development we find that in feature film development in the year under question some 20% of projects were written by women. This seems to be a more or less consistent percentage for a number of years.

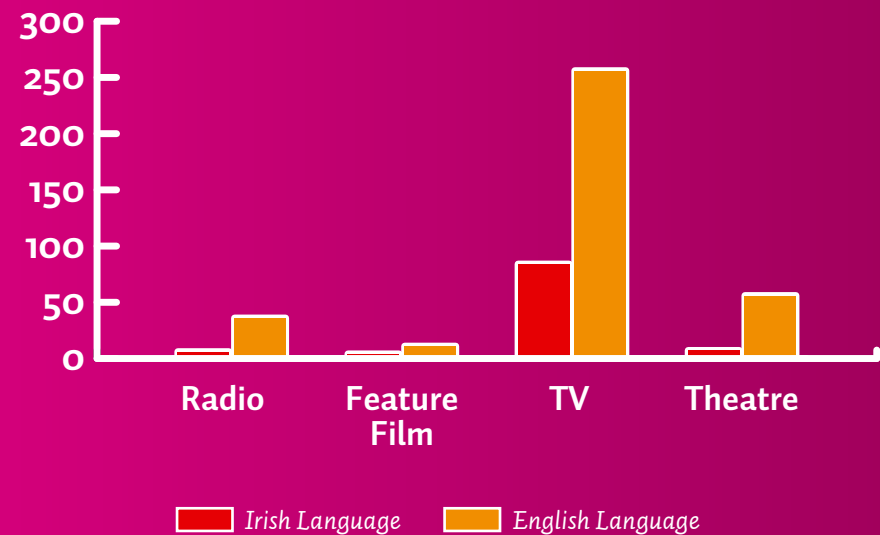
GENDER BREAKDOWN OF FILM BOARD DEVELOPMENT RECIPIENTS



Between Jan 2003 and Dec 2006, in total 64 women and 245 men received Film Board Development Finance.

We are unable to say whether the percentage of women selected for development funding reflects a similar percentage of the number of applicants (or whether the number of projects submitted to the Film Board by production companies reflects the number of pitches made to them by women writers), but we can clearly say that women with projects in paid development as feature films are significantly less likely to succeed in having their films produced than men in the same situation.

IRISH LANGUAGE PROJECTS OF +25 MINUTES WHICH WERE PRODUCED



Writing in Irish

The number of projects written in Irish is surprisingly low, with the amount made up largely of television and in particular Ros na Run (76 episodes).

It may perhaps be the case that in the next year of the report there will be more of an impact because of the BCI fund and the Irish Language Fund in Northern Ireland.

How much did writers earn from this work?

By going through each of the 449 projects we are able to make a calculation of the amount earned by writers for each project. We are unable to be as exact in the area of payment for development, but can make reasonably accurate estimate of the amounts paid.

In the area of payments in theatre our calculation starts from writing payments and includes a calculation of box office percentages and for other forms of secondary payments such as other productions and so on. The amount is still somewhat lower than that estimated by the Arts Council in its publication on Living and Working Conditions in the theatre in Ireland. We think that this difference can be at least partly explained by the Councils concentration in its analysis on established writers who might credibly be thought to have higher income than some of the writers who had theatre productions in the year under review and were being produced for the first time.

We have also revisited some of the short production payments. A number of writers who have credits for longer

productions also have credits and therefore income on the short productions. It would seem invidious not to include this income in calculating payments in general. Therefore where we are aware of a credit or credits for a writer for a short production/s who also has a credit for a longer production or a work in paid development we have included those amounts in.

The average annual payment that results from this calculation in respect of writers with credits on produced work of +25” is €15,400.

Of course an average is not hugely informative of itself, but the figure does seem to reflect similar amount reported by the Arts Council in its study of living and working conditions in the theatre in Ireland, which reported an income for theatre writers of €13,450.

Looking at these averages from sector to sector the area of television is clearly the one which provides the highest average payment to writers, but this is in fact heavily dependent on the two long running series, Fair City and

Ros na Rún, which offer a higher than average number of episodes to a number of writers. **If the writers of these two series and their income is removed from the overall calculation, then the average income for the twelve month period for the remaining writers from mid 2006 to mid 2007 is €10,510.**

In calculating income, paid development work must also be taken into account. If we add in the amount of development expenditure and the number of writers who had paid development work (but did not have credited production in the year), it might be expected that the average income would increase. However, the result of this addition is to increase the number of writers with paid work of any kind but not to significantly impact the average income.

The number of writers increases to 279 and their average income is €14,105.

This demonstrates again that expenditure on development increases the number of writers earning an income, but does not increase the average amount earned.

Again, the average income is artificially inflated by the inclusion of the writers of the two long-running series. **If one removes these writers and their income from the calculation, the average income for the remaining writers reduces to €10,852.**

Conclusion

279 writers had paid work as writers for performance (radio, film, theatre and television) in the twelve month period from the 1st July 2006 to the 30th June 2007. Of those, 189 (or 68%) had credits on produced work in that year.

Of those with credits on produced work, 42% were women, but this proportion is heavily skewed in favour of television, with women severely under-represented in feature film.

The amount of Irish language writing seems extremely low with the possible exception of television where the 78 episodes of Ros na Run make a considerable difference.

The money available to spend on writing (excluding writers of the two long-running series) is spread across a very large number of writers, reducing the amount that they earn to a level - at €10,500 - so low that very few persons can make a living exclusively from writing.

The Guild intends to produce a similar report each year from now on in order to provide a fuller picture of the reality of writing for the stage and screen in Ireland.

The ZeBBies: Year One

ACT I

At the AGM of the Irish Playwrights and Screenwriters Guild in April 2007 the members of the Guild voted to establish an annual award to celebrate writing in Ireland for television, radio, feature film, and theatre. A number of volunteers formed a committee to organise the event, and they decided to name the awards the ZeBBies: to honour O. Z. (Zebbie) Whitehead who sponsored a short play award for the Guild for many years.

ACT II

The committee members and the Guild staff set about compiling a master list of all creative output by writers who were eligible for the award: each script had be written by an Irish writer(s). or a writer(s) normally resident in Ireland, and it had to be released to the public between 1st July 2006 and 30th June 2007. This investigation required tenacity and relentless detective skills on the part of the committee, and enlisted the cooperation and aid from employees of broadcasting bodies, government arts organisations, festival organisers, film financing agencies, as well as theatre experts, industry specialists, and Guild members.

The master list of qualifying works was unveiled to the members of the Guild in September, and nominations were sought. In October a short list was revealed in each category: television, radio, feature film, and theatre. A secure online database was custom-built for the voting process, and each member of the Guild was emailed a personal username and password with which to vote in the ZeBBies. Thanks to the cooperation of the writers and/or their producers/agents each short listed script was available online for members to evaluate before voting.

A logo was designed, the Sugar Club was chosen as the venue for the awards ceremony, a band and DJ were hired, free pizza was organised, and Senator David Norris agreed to be Master of Ceremonies. A crew of lighting, sound, and decorating professionals swung into action to set up the room on the night.

ACT III

The ZeBBies awards ceremony in November was wittily presented by Senator David Norris, and proved to be an entertaining and glittering affair. The awards were handed out by novelist Anne Enright, Mary Cloake, Director of the Arts Council, Simon Perry CEO of the Irish Film Board, Noel Curran Managing Director of Television, RTE and Adrian Moynes, Managing Director of Radio, RTE. The winners were announced:

- » **Honorary Award for Services to Writers:**
Anthony Cronin
- » **Best TV Script:**
Ken Harmon for Legend (Ep. 1)
- » **Best Film Script:**
John Carney for Once
- » **Best Theatre Script:**
Tom Murphy for Alice Trilogy
- » **Best Radio Script:**
Martin Lynch for An Enemy of the People

Each winner was present on the night to receive his award. Afterwards, there were plenty of people to buy celebratory drinks. Members and non-members of the Guild pronounced the ZeBBies ceremony a fun and successful evening, as well as an important acknowledgement of the strength of Irish writing talent.

MAURA MCHUGH



Tom Murphy and Mary Cloake



Adrian Moynes and Martin Lynch



John Carney and Simon Perry



Anthony Cronin and Anne Enright



Ken Harmon and Noel Curran



Senator David Norris



This document is copyright of the Irish Playwrights' and Screenwriters' Guild. Any errors or omissions are our responsibility. The information in this document may be quoted provided the source is acknowledged.

We are grateful to the many people who provided information for the ZeBBies and for this analysis. We would very much appreciate having any comments, views or opinions on the material presented here.

Thanks to Clóna Ruiséil; Lindsay Jane Sedgwick and Kate Perry for assistance with some of the more mind-numbing analysis and to Mark Gargan for the use of his photographs.



*The Irish Playwrights' & Screenwriters' Guild
Art House, Curved Street,
Temple Bar, Dublin 2, Ireland
+353 1 670 9970*