

Garage

RELEASE DATE: 7TH MARCH 2008

Ireland | 85 mins | 2007

Directed by **Lenny Abrahamson**

Written by **Mark O'Halloran**

Produced by **Ed Guiney**

Starring

Pat Shortt

Anne-Marie Duff

Conor J Ryan

Distributed by

Soda Pictures

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Synopsis

Regarded by his neighbours as a harmless misfit, Josie has spent all his adult life as the caretaker of a crumbling petrol station on the outskirts of a small town in the mid-west of Ireland. He is limited, lonely, yet relentlessly optimistic and, in his own peculiar way, happy. **Garage** is the story of Josie's hapless search for intimacy over the course of a summer which sees his life changed forever.

Garage is the second film from director Lenny Abrahamson and writer Mark O'Halloran the team behind the award-winning black comedy **Adam & Paul**.

In the same spare style as their first award-winning film, **Adam & Paul**, director Lenny Abrahamson and writer Mark O'Halloran bring us **Garage**, a startling and hypnotic tragi-comedy from the margins of contemporary Irish life.

Regarded by his neighbours as a harmless misfit, eliciting idle kindness, benign tolerance and occasional abuse, Josie has spent all his adult life as the caretaker of a crumbling petrol station on the outskirts of a small town in the mid-west of Ireland. He is limited, lonely, yet relentlessly optimistic and, in his own peculiar way, happy.

But then over the course of a summer, Josie's world shifts. A teenager, David, comes to work with him. David likes him. They open up to each other and suddenly the lonely adult is drinking cans down at the railway tracks with the local kids. He is awakened to needs in himself that have never been met. And Carmel, from the local shop, who has always been kind to him, stirs feelings within him that he struggles to name.

And then one thoughtless moment unravels the threads of faltering friendship. Events spiral. Josie's life is changed, forever.

Directed by	Lenny Abrahamson
Written by	Mark O'Halloran
Produced by	Ed Guiney
Executive Producers	Andrew Lowe Peter Carlton
Director Of Photography	Peter Robertson
Production Designer	Padraig O'Neill
Film Editor	Isobel Stephenson
Music Composed by	Stephen Rennicks
Casting Director	Amy Rowan
Line Producer	Catherine Magee
Sound Recordist	Rob Flanagan
Sound Design	Niall Brady
Costume Design	Sonya Lennon
Make Up Design	Tom Mc Inerney
First Assistant Director	Sean Griffin
Locations Manager	Mick Swan

garage

Principal Cast

Josie

Pat Shortt

Carmel

Anne-Marie Duff

David

Conor J Ryan

Breffni

Don Wycherley

Sully

Andrew Bennett

Garda Michael

Denis Conway

Mr Skerrit

Tom Hickey

Dan

George Costigan

Mr Gallagher

John Keogh

Director **Lenny Abrahamson** talks about making **Garage**

Style of film

*"The style of film that Mark and I do together... I think you could call it maybe 'minimal slapstick' or 'slapstick tragedy'. It's this kind of weird combination of two genres that you don't feel should go together that interests me as a filmmaker. In this way, **Garage** is part of the same family as **Adam & Paul**. It's a physical film. It's about this character who has a very strong visual kind of signature. He walks in a very particular way. He speaks in a very particular way. So, it has echoes of the same kind of Vaudeville as our first film. I think it's this curious style that allows **Garage** to be tender without being sentimental. For me it's a very tender film, a testament to somebody on the periphery of things whose life would normally go unremarked. But what marks **Garage** out for me is the change in tone as the film goes on. It starts with more of an emphasis on the slapstick absurdity of Josie as a character – it starts out showing him how he is seen by others – but it gradually changes perspective, it becomes more internal, ending up, I hope, undermining that first easy view of him.*

The film is certainly dark but it's not dark in that black-comic manipulative way that you see in cinema a lot. It's dark because what happens in the film is dark, because the lives of people like Josie do contain a tremendous amount of darkness. I suppose it is truthfully dark."

Visual Style

"I like to work in a really spare visual style. So there is a kind of bareness and simplicity in the way that we shoot. If you can keep the style still enough, then the smallest ripples become visible.

That is not to say that every sequence or scene is shot in the same way. I like the idea of incorporating different styles within the same film. Not in a very self-consciously modernistic way so that the audience will notice it, but just in a way that allows the audience to feel each scene appropriately.

Peter Robertson is the Director of Photography and I've worked with him many times before on commercials. I just think he is an excellent cameraman. I love the fact that Peter lights incredibly simply. He's got the confidence not to over-light and not to over-egg the shot. So as a result, not only do you get very beautiful images but ones where the scaffolding is hidden. You don't see the tricks. It just seems right and at the same time is beautifully judged."

The **Location**

Garage was shot around Birr, Co Offaly, Portumna and Woodford, Co Galway and Co Tipperary, as well as some interior scenes in Dublin.

"We were looking for several things: a garage as the key location, then a town as outskirts, a railway line, a lake: particular things that are part of the vocabulary of a small town – specific locations where teenagers gather.

The garage was what led us to the part of the country we chose – the west midlands. I liked the area because it was unremarkable. Many filmmakers attempt to make Ireland look like Ireland by emphasising aspects of it. What I try to do is reflect what's there in striking, but truthful ways."

The **Edit**

"I think you make a film three times: First when it's written. Second when it's shot. Third when it's edited.

*You have to be prepared to dump a pre-determined vision and construct the film that is really there in the rushes. I made radical cuts to **Garage** in the edit. Our first cut was 2 and a half hours long. The film ended up at 85 minutes long. With all those cuts, the real Josie at the centre of the film came out. By making it sparer, it became deeper."*

The Music

"It's about as little music as you get in a film these days. Most films might have 30 music cues. Garage has one.

Stephen Rennicks, my long-term collaborator and great friend, composed an orchestral and quite epic, beautiful, dense sound, heard first at the top of the film. Then you cut to this little fat bloke who appears to be having a very prosaic conversation with his boss. For that to work, Stephen had to hint at the gravitas without turning it into farce at the top. By doing this, he helped to create anticipation of a film of greater depth than at first might seem to be the case, which I hope is justified by the film when the music is repeated at the end."

The Casting

*"**Josie** is really a contemporary village idiot character but the Irish village doesn't have any place for him anymore. Josie's absolutely the central character. He is in every single scene. It's his film.*

*I had **Pat Shortt** in mind from early on because Pat brings with him three things that are very vital: 1, He is a brilliant straight actor, even though he is primarily known as a comedian. 2, He's also a physical comedian, a clown, so he's able to nail a character's walk, their style of speech, he can physically inhabit a character like all great clowns. And 3, he looks like Josie should look. He's got the right body shape.*

Pat is able to let you have glimpses of the deeper inner life that Josie has. He moves seamlessly between almost high farce to very dark, truthful realistic performance."

*"**David** is an intelligent teenager. Sourceful, sensitive and largely out of place in this small town that his mother and he have now moved to. People usually tighten up a little bit on camera. Conor seems to relax in this incredible way that makes him appear more natural. He is a very natural film actor. Garage is not one of those films where there is a tremendous amount of emoting but it is a demanding role that he has taken really seriously. Conor has worked really hard on it. As a result there is a very finished sort of character there. For an actor that young to achieve that is very unusual."*

*"Mark writes great, tough women and **Carmel** is a brilliant kind of character. She's small town attractive but sinking.*

I thought initially that Carmel would be older, but I had a different sort of Carmel in my head. Anne-Marie showed me a Carmel that I hadn't thought of and ultimately it was the right one. She is a really fine actress and I'm delighted that she's in it."

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

Director **Lenny Abrahamson**

Lenny Abrahamson was born in Dublin in 1966. After studying philosophy at Trinity College he directed the short film **3 Joes** which won the Best European Short Film award at the 1991 Cork Film Festival and the Organiser's Award at the 1992 Oberhausen Short Film Festival.

His first feature film, **Adam & Paul**, written by Mark O'Halloran and produced by Speers Film/Element Pictures, was released in August 2004 and quickly became a critical and box office hit in Ireland. In the same year it won the Galway Film Fleadh as well as being nominated for eight Irish Film and Television Awards, winning the award for Best Director.

In 2005 it played in Official Selection at the Berlin Film Festival, Panorama section and won both the Grand Prix and the FIPRESCI prize at the Sofia International Film Festival. It was nominated in the European Screenwriter category at the European Film Awards in the same year. **Adam & Paul** opened in the UK in June 2005 to the best reviews for an Irish film in over a decade. It went on to win the Best Screenplay prize at the 2006 London Evening Standard Film Awards.

At present, Lenny is in production on **Prosperity** a series of four one-hour TV films written by Mark O'Halloran and produced by Element Pictures for RTÉ (Ireland's public service broadcaster).

Lenny has several screenplays currently in development with Element Pictures; **Navvies**

and **Shame** to be written by Mark O'Halloran, and **Adsville**, which he will both write and direct.

Garage is his second film.

Awards and Festivals

Winner of the Best First Feature award at the *2004 Galway Film Fleadh*

Winner of the Best Director award at the *2004 Irish Film and Television Awards*

Screened at the *2004 Telluride Film Festival*

Official Selection *2005 Berlin Film Festival, Panorama*

Winner of the FIPRESCI Prize and the Grand Prix at the *2005 Sofia International Film Festival*

Winner of the Best Director award at the *2005 ANONIMUL International Independent Film Festival, Romania*

Screened at the *46th Thessaloniki International Film Festival*

Nominated for the Golden Iris at *2005 Brussels European Film Festival*

Nominated for Best Irish Film at *2005 Irish Film & Television Awards*

Nominated in the European Screenwriter category at the *2005 European Film Awards*

Winner of the Best Screenplay award at the *2006 London Evening Standard Film Awards*.

Writer Mark O'Halloran

Mark O'Halloran is a screenwriter, playwright and actor based in Dublin.

His first feature film **Adam & Paul**, directed by Lenny Abrahamson and produced by Speers Film/Element Pictures, was released in August 2004 and quickly became a critical and box office hit in Ireland. In the same year it won the Galway Film Fleadh as well as being nominated for eight Irish Film and Television Awards, including the award for Best Script for Film. In 2005 it played in Official Selection at the Berlin Film Festival, Panorama section and won both the Grand Prix and the FIPRESCI prize at the Sofia International Film Festival. At the European Film Awards in the same year Mark was nominated in the Best European Screenwriter category. **Adam & Paul** opened in the UK in June 2005 to the best reviews for an Irish film in over a decade. Following the release, Mark won the Best Screenplay prize at the 2006 London Evening Standard Film Awards.

Prosperity, a 4 x 1 hr drama series produced by Element Pictures for RTÉ, which was

created and written by Mark, is currently in production. The series is to be directed by Lenny Abrahamson.

Mark has several projects in development with Element Pictures including the screenplays **Navvies** and **Shame**.

He has also written several plays including **The Head of Red O'Brien** which has been performed in Dublin and Glasgow, was nominated as best play at the Dublin Fringe Festival and been translated into Swedish and performed at Theater Albino in Stockholm.

Mark was named as *Shooting Star* by EFP at Berlin Film Festival 2005.

Producer **Ed Guiney**

Ed Guiney and Andrew Lowe run Element Pictures a film and television drama production company based in Dublin and London.

Most recently he completed **Garage**, with backing from the Irish Film Board, RTÉ, BCI and Film4, the follow-up film to the award-winning **Adam & Paul**, written by Mark O'Halloran and directed by Lenny Abrahamson. He is currently in production with **Prosperity**, a series of 4 one-hour drama for RTÉ by the same team. The series will be transmitted this coming autumn.

In 2006 Ed also produced **Death of a President** for Channel 4, written and directed by Gabriel Range, which won the International Critics FIPRESCI Prize at the 2006 Toronto International Film Festival.

Also in 2006, Element Pictures co-produced **The Wind that Shakes the Barley**, directed by Ken Loach, which won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and has become the most successful independent film ever released in Ireland.

Other recent Element productions include: **Adam & Paul** (Lenny Abrahamson) which premiered in Berlin; **The League of Gentlemen's Apocalypse** (Steve Bendelack), produced with Tiger Aspect Pictures for Universal/Film Four; **Isolation** (Billy O'Brien), produced with The Bureau/Blue Orange for Lionsgate/Film Four/Redbus; **Lassie** (Charles

Sturridge) produced with Firstsight for Classic Media/Odyssey and released in December in the UK via Entertainment Film Distributors.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Pat Shortt plays Josie

Pat Shortt is one of Ireland's most popular comedians. An actor, comedian and writer, he first came to attention as one of **D'Unbelievables** alongside Jon Kenny. They wreaked havoc in theatres all over Ireland, Great Britain and The United States with their own particular brand of physical comedy – which they took backstage too. Pat then became established as a solo star with massive sell-out, one-man shows touring the country. His television comedy series, **Killinaskully**, has been the most popular television programme each year in Ireland for the past three years.

Pat Shortt talks about playing **Josie**

The **Role**

“What attracted me to the role was the character and the simplicity of him. I knew it was very different to what has been done before about a character in a rural community. And the part was quite physical which suited me. My own comedy is quite physical and that's one of the reasons why Lenny chose me.”

While Josie is slow and a bit backward and a bit behind, there's a spark with him as well. It is all very innocent with Josie. There is no malice, no badness. The biggest challenge was carrying the movie. To bring a character to life, such a simple character in many ways, was difficult. I was constantly trying to pull it back. In many ways the character is like the ones I write myself, but the comedy is much, much quieter, and the tragedy louder.”

Conor J Ryan plays David

Conor is a student of Crescent College Comprehensive School, Limerick and is currently studying for his Junior Certificate. His interest in drama and music and dance began at the tender age of 4 when he attended Spotlight Stage School and performed in all of their productions playing various roles from straight to comedy.

He joined Centrestage Theatre School in 2003 and went on to develop his acting skills.

Garage is Conor's first major film role and he has loved every minute of it.

Anne-Marie Duff plays Carmel

Anne-Marie Duff is a BAFTA nominated actress whose films include **French Film** (Sophie) by Jackie Oudenay, **Born Equal** (Michelle) by Dominic Savage, **The Waiting Room** (Anna) by Roger Goldby, **Garage** (Carmel) by Lenny Abrahamson, **Magdalene Sisters** (Margaret) by Peter Mullan, **Enigma** (Kay) by Michael Apted and **Mild and Bitter** (lead) by Bill Britten.

Her television credits include **The History of Mr Polly** (Miriam) by Gilles McKinnon, **Elizabeth - The Virgin Queen** (Elizabeth) by Coky Giedroyc, **Shameless** (Fiona), **Charles II** (Minette) by Joe Wright for BBC and **Dr Zhivago** (Olya Demina) by Giacomo Camiotti.

Anne-Marie has also worked extensively in theatre.