

Writers of gritty Netflix crime series create special Irish role for Oscar nominee Keoghan after he asks to appear in show

TOP BAZ



TAILOR-MADE ROLE: Keoghan as Tadgh, and Brian Gleeson as Jonny

THE creators of the Netflix hit crime drama *Top Boy* have revealed how they crafted a special storyline around Barry Keoghan's gangster character after the Dublin actor personally asked them to find him a role.

The *Banshees of Inisherin* star is one of Hollywood's hottest properties, but he personally approached the *Top Boy* creators to ask if he could appear in the critically acclaimed series.

Fans of the series were delighted

'It was very much built around and for Barry'

when the Oscar nominee appeared in the fifth and final season of the London crime sleeper hit, released this week on Netflix and the platform's number one show in Ireland this weekend.

The Summerhill actor plays Irish gangster Jonny – alongside fellow Dub Brian Gleeson – adding yet another unsettling and morally haywire character to his burgeoning body of work. For Keoghan and Gleeson – who both shot to prominence at home for

By **Colm McGuirk**

their roles in *Love/Hate* – it's a return to their TV gangster roots. And according to reviews so far, the Irish pair don't disappoint.

Top Boy executive producer Charles Steel said Keoghan's character and story arc in the new season were 'very much built around and for' the Dublin actor.

Steel said Keoghan 'claims to be the world's number one fan of the show', and added the talented 30-year-old actor had a 'connection' with the series' creator, Irish novelist and screenwriter Ronan Bennett. 'Barry was talking to Ronan to see if there could ever be a world in which he could be in it and he would jump at the opportunity because he loves the show,' Steel explained. 'Given the quality of actor that Barry is, Ronan and ourselves just saw a great opportunity to create a character with

him and I think Brian came following that. In terms of cementing an Irish character and an Irish storyline, it was very much built around and for Barry.'

Critics and fans have lauded the *Banshees* star's contribution to the final season of *Top Boy* – the only complaints seemingly that he isn't on screen for nearly long enough.

His appearance comes as a full-circle moment of sorts for Irish viewers, many of whom first became familiar with Keoghan as Wayne 'the cat killer' in *Love/Hate* 10 years ago. The masterful crime series was dubbed

the Irish version of HBO classic *The Wire* and now Keoghan takes an important role in 'the UK Wire' – though his character is further up the criminal pecking order than Wayne ever managed.

In the intervening years, the BAFTA winner has been no stranger to depicting criminals and crime-adjacent characters.

He played an underling to Michael Fassbender and Brendan Gleeson's crime family in 2016's *Trespass Against Us*, before a deeply unsettling turn as psychopathic teenager Martin Lang opposite Colin Farrell in *The Killing of a Sacred Deer* in 2017.

Keoghan later played a rather more genteel crook in the 2018 docudrama *American Animals*, in which he depicts art student Spencer Reinhard, who orchestrated a book heist in a Kentucky University in 2004.

And in 2019 he was back in gangster mode in Ireland for crime drama *Calm With Horses*, giving him a BAFTA nomination. He is currently working on Andrea Arnold's *Bird*. No plot details have been released, though from early photographs – in which Keoghan is tat-

toed like a Central American narco prisoner – his character may be familiar with society's seedy underbelly. And Keoghan will play another outlaw in what he has called a dream project – an upcoming retelling of *Billy The Kid* directed by Bart Layton. Set to be a more nuanced reflection on the man (the son of Irish famine emigrants who was orphaned at 14 and dead at 21) behind the

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myth (a picaresque gunslinger who killed 21 people), Keoghan has said he wanted to 'step outside of the legend that was built up by the papers and tackle the pressure he must have felt from those early days.'

'I felt related to Billy in the sense of him being a mummy's boy, but obviously, I took a different path, turning my circumstances into something positive.' Keoghan's mother battled drug addiction and died when he was just 12.

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STARS IN THE MAKING: Keoghan and Gleeson in *Love/Hate*



Man, 60s, critical after attack in tourist hotspot

A MAN in his 60s is in a critical condition after he was brutally assaulted in a popular tourist town in the early hours of yesterday morning.

By **Debbie McCann**

The attack occurred in Westport, Co. Mayo, following an altercation on High Street.

Gardai confirmed a man his 20s has been arrested in connection with the assault.

It is understood the injured man is originally from Co. Roscommon,

but has been living in the Westport area for some time. He is being treated at Mayo University Hospital in Castlebar.

Garda forensic teams carried

out an examination of the scene yesterday.

Gardaí are appealing to anyone who may have witnessed this incident to contact them.