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→ Continued from page 15

back to the Prix de l'Abbaye, in a bid to improve on last year's performance. He went over on the boat during the week with his regular work rider Maxine O'Sullivan, who reports that he settled in well. His season has been geared up to today, and all the evidence suggests that he is a better horse now as a five-year-old than the horse who finished fifth last year.

“He just seems to be still improving,” says Condon. “When he won the Phoenix Sprint Stakes at the Curragh in August, a group 3 race, that was the best performance of his career.

“Then, when he went back to the Curragh and won the Flying Five, a group 1, that was obviously a step up on that.”

The trainer is matter-of-fact about it, but that was some day, on such a big day, at the Irish Champions Festival, a first group 1 win for Moss Tucker, a fourth for Ken Condon. The Excelebration gelding dug deep that day for Billy Lee, he went to the line strongly, and he got there a half a length in front of Get Ahead, with Hig hfield Princess and Art Power and Bradsell in his wake.

“I'm very fond of this horse,” says Condon thoughtfully. “Where he has come from, how he has got there. You wouldn't have said that he was brilliant, you wouldn't have said that he was classy. They are words that you usually associate with group 1 winners. But he has rolled up his sleeves, he has honed his skills. He has worked at it, to get to where he is today.”

The ball could have hopped a little better this week, his draw would ideally have been a little lower and the ground would ideally have been a little softer, but you know that Billy Lee will have a plan, and you know that Moss Tucker will give his all. Because that's what good horses do.

Eamon Carr learnt to read by reciting boxing reports and has gone into print with memories of Ireland's golden age

# ‘He’ll eat you alive, they said, when I asked for Jack Charlton’s number’

MICHAEL FOLEY



Eamon Carr is freewheeling through his third hour of effortless storytelling when he happens upon an afternoon in London with Charlie Watts in a private club off Park Lane. This was a meeting of drummers living their second lives: Charlie on a break from the Rolling Stones promoting a jazz album, Carr long in tooth and quill as a journalist by then, decades after helping invent Irish rock and roll with Horslips.

Watts was lounging in an armchair, all louche and laconic, dressed immaculately in a suit. “He was like a Kray twin,” says Carr.

He was watching cricket. As a stalwart of the Leinster Cricket Club fifths, Carr chanced an icebreaker.

“How are we doing?” “And Charlie Watts says, ‘I’ve heard

everything now. An Irishman saying how are we doing about an English team.’ I said Charlie, hold on a sec, don't forget Ireland play in the Benson and Hedges League, which they did at the time. We’re in the league man!”

Carr chanced the old joke: what do you call someone who hangs around with musicians? Charlie didn't even allow him to reach the punchline (drummers). “You wouldn't say that to Elvin Jones [drummer for jazz master John Coltrane], would you?”

So they swapped notes on Elvin and Ed Joyce and Ronnie Irani and Ziggy Modeliste, the great New Orleans funk drummer. Carr adopts a pitch-perfect impersonation of Watts. “Oh Zigaboo man, yeah.”

Was this his heaven? Maybe that was another night beside Charlie at an Allen Toussaint gig? Hold that thought. Rewind to Carr in a lift at the Excel Arena with Jimmy Magee, both heading for ringside to watch Katie Taylor win an Olympic gold medal.

“You look nervous,” Magee said. “I am,” Carr replied, his mind churning with memories of his eight-year-old self thrilled by the stories and names



Carr, co-founder of Horslips and their drummer, has a rich cross section of life experiences and boxing features prominently throughout them

in the paper of his first Olympics in 1956. “Now I'm thinking this is the Olympics. An Olympic final and I'm at the ring. I'm reporting. That was even more of a pinch-me moment than sitting alongside Charlie Watts. This was beyond my ken.”

In 75 years as poet, author, musician, rock star, playwright, record label founder, art historian, magazine editor, publisher, journalist, Manchester United and Rocky Marciano fan, advertising copywriter, photographer, collaborator and inspiration

for artists across six decades, boxing was always a thread woven into the backdrop of that outsized life. Carr followed his father to the local boxing gym in Kells and learned to read by reciting boxing reports in the paper.

His father and uncles painted him pictures of fight nights at the National Stadium that stuck for ever in the back of his mind, years before Carr stepped into the actual ring as a spoken word poet, opening for Fleetwood Mac and Ginger Baker's Air Force, or those sweat-drenched nights when Horslips regularly blew the doors off the place. When Carr was isolated as a child in a sanatorium suffering from chronic bronchiectasis, a severe lung condition, fighting for his life, boxing was his guide rope back to the outside world.

“On those dark, terrifying nights, as I lay sweating,” he writes, “struggling for breath, retching and spewing mucus into an enamelled basin and hearing my fragile chest wheezing like a battered old accordion, I wasn't alone. I was part of the great boxing universe ... I was going to come out fighting. That's what we boxers, big and small, did.”

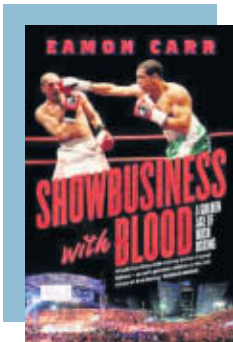
Boxing was also part of the world he was forced to leave to chase different dreams. In the late 1960s he started taking the cattle boat to Liverpool, knocking around the Cavern club and hanging out with Roger McGough and other poets.

“Suddenly I'm this effete beatnik poet. Boxing is sort of in the background. Then I'm in the band. The problem with being in a band in the Seventies was when we weren't rehearsing we were gigging and touring all the time. I used to pass a sign for Gleason's Gym in New York. Did I ever? No I didn't. Shows? Never had a chance. There was always this thing that you're denying a little bit of yourself.”

That feeling returned after Horslips had split in 1980 and Carr was working for a record label. He went for lunch with a couple of high-end executives who suddenly jumped from Sade's new record to talking about a fight. Carr hadn't seen it. He felt marooned.

“I'm going, am I denying a part of myself? I should really know. I have a background in this s\*\*t.”

It took time to get back to boxing when he started writing with the Evening Herald. First music and the arts, then he was directed to do some interviews. Extracting a phone number from the sports department to contact Jack Charlton was the first challenge. “That was when the sports



SHOWBUSINESS WITH BLOOD: A GOLDEN AGE OF IRISH BOXING

By Eamon Carr, Lilliput Press, €20

dept was like a medieval guild,” he says. “Then the voice comes: ‘He'll eat you alive.’”

He didn't. In 1993 Carr finally returned to boxing just when Steve Collins's rivalry with Chris Eubank was catching fire and bore witness to an era packed with champions and characters. With 30 years of tapes and notebooks and a head full of stories, writing a book about the whole scene seemed the thing to do. The outcome is a wonderful telling of a time for Irish boxing that reads now like a golden age.

“It depends on which letter of the alphabet you're looking at, but I counted about five world champions and a lot of European champions. It had the bang of that off it.”

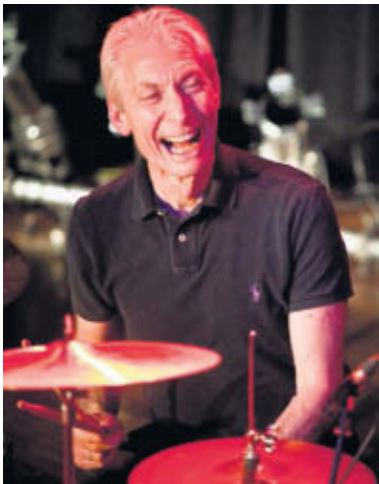
The book ends at the Regency Hotel weigh-in shootings in 2016, the unspooling effect of MTK Global on Irish boxing gradually creeping across the narrative like a shadow. But at its heart this is a story about boxers and the sport's unique ability to repel and enthrall while magnifying any aspect of the human condition.

Carr's life in music also gave him another unspoken affinity with boxers. Both spend years alone in bedrooms, rehearsal rooms and gyms in pursuit of one enormous dream. People make it. People don't. Triumph and tragedy always exist within inches of each other.

“[Musicians] mightn't have ultimately been the most well-rounded individuals. I'm not saying I am, we all would have had problems. But you start looking at people: Rory [Gallagher], Philip [Lynott], guys on the crew. People died. There was loads of casualties.

“The first time I went to London, the first band Horslips stayed in a hotel with Badfinger. I learned really quickly some of them had bad habits already. Guys died. Committed suicide. You became conscious there were pressures. They weren't just imaginary. Maybe the musicians and the boxers weren't the best people to deal with these pressures because they had been concentrating on something else and hadn't become more fully rounded.”

He saw plenty of fighters down the years struggling with the risks and rewards. One night during a dreary bill at the Stadium, Carr escaped for dinner with Brian Peters, promoter of Katie Taylor, Bernard Dunne and others. Over dumplings at a Chinese restaurant he feasted on a night of yarns with some hard-bitten veterans of Irish boxing. Sitting beside him was Mike Perez, a Cuban boxer recently



Watts was passionate about jazz

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## Charlie Watts couldn't believe an Irishman was asking: how are ‘we’ doing at cricket?

smuggled to Europe. The stories and accents were flying over Perez's head.

“I felt a little like that when I was surrounded by record company moguls in L.A. Jet-lagged and they're all doing cocaine and all talking shite and I'm out of my depth because I'm an eejit from Kells.”

Kenneth Egan's story felt similar. Soon after Egan won his Olympic silver medal in 2008 Carr interviewed him in New York, where Egan was being feted by professional promoters from both coasts. A few weeks later, Carr was ringside for an amateur international against England when Egan disappeared from Dublin without warning.

“I got a really odd vibe. I've seen this in rock and roll: fight or flight. I got a very bad premonition.”

Then he heard Egan had returned to New York. “It all made sense. How are you going to keep him down on the farm? He was king of New York for

three or four days. I thought that's a dead-end street. He's gone back to New York to tap into that again. It's not going to happen.

“They got him home and people lashed into him. That could have ended in tears and it was shaping up like that. I'd seen stuff like that. Guys in bands just losing it because they're tired, stressed out, emotionally exhausted. There's probably stimulants and they don't know how to cope with that. So they disappear.”

Carr's own life in boxing was also complicated in parts. With Horslips, there was always a useful buffer between his public and private lives. “Most people who were fans of Horslips believed I couldn't read or write. On the first album the liner notes are witty: it's like we found Eamon Carr with his Noddy books learning to read. People getting autographs from the band would approach me and weren't sure whether they should ask.”

Revisiting his relationship with boxing compelled him to go deeper. After his mother died when Carr was nine, he went to boarding school and navigated his way to another life through Little Richard, Sam Cooke and rock and roll. Years later, when he returned to boxing as a journalist, Carr never talked boxing with his father like they did when he was a child. Boxing as a bridge couldn't bear the weight of all the years in between.

“I never really wanted to bring it up because after my mother died, eventually my dad married again. I had two sisters from this new relationship. Joe [his brother] was there. I was never going to start talking about the fights because I didn't want to be bringing him back there. He wouldn't have minded, probably, but that was my problem. My hang-up. So I didn't deal with that.”

Getting personal was hard, but higher powers compelled him to go there. Decades after Carr published a magazine featuring poets like Seamus Heaney and Allan Ginsberg and hosted poetry evenings that sometimes attracted a nervous Phil Lynott. When he met Heaney years later they talked about the purgatory of bringing his own self to his written work.

“Heaney started laughing. He's looking at me like I'm incredibly naive. And he said, ‘Eamon. You must know. The truth will never let you down.’ If you call yourself a writer, it's incumbent on you to deal with stuff. You have to fess up and tell the truth. At least I had this thing in the back of my mind that Heaney was watching.”

He would have approved.

## Today's racecards

### Killarney

Going: yielding-good to yielding in places

2.00 IRISH STALLION FARMS EBF MAES MAIDEN HURDLE

1 645P00 DARK IMAGE 13 (T) E McCarthy 5-11-7 G B Noonan (5)

2 431-26 FINAL DECISION 30 A McCann 4-11-6 A P Heskin

3 3F-3 GOODIE TWO SHOES 30 (T,BF) J P O'Brien 4-11-6 S D Torrens

4 30-040 BALLERINA BOXER 9 J McConnell 5-10-13 B W Harvey (3)

5 543-P0 CALLED ARIS 13 Ms Debbie Hartnett 5-10-13 A McCartin

6 52002 LACKANEE MAG 16 (T) D Budds 4-11-7 S FitzGerald

7 0 MADAM BAUN 13 Noel O'Neill 6-10-13 P J Carberry

8 45 ONLY A DOLLAR 42 S Ahern 5-10-13 P T Enright

9 23523 SILENT APPROACH 13 C O'Keefe 5-10-13 D J O'Keefe

10 0 TROPICAL IMAGE 13 E McCarthy 6-10-13 T J Kelly (7)

### 3.00 TOTE GUARANTEE AVAILABLE ON COURSE & TOTE.IE RATED NOVICE HURDLE

1 2241-11 GORTILLMOH 60 Elliott 7-11-12 J Gairford

2 44-314 LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE 32 (H) G Cromwell 6-11-12 K M Donoghue

3 0-6214 SOLITARY MAN 37 (C) E Bolger 5-11-9 D J O'Keefe

4 0-1000 HARTUR D'ARC 8 (H) T Gilbey 6-11-3 D King (3)

5 40-036 WINNING SMUT 13 M Hourigan 4-11-0 P Byrnes (5)

Betting: 2-1 Gortillmoth, 9-4 Lake Winnepesaukee, 3-1 Solitary Man, 6-1 Hartur D'arc, 10-1 Winning Smut

### 3.35 FOLLOW TOTERACING ON TWITTER HANDICAP HURDLE

1 FPP0-P THE STREET 146 E McNamara 7-12-0 B W Harvey (3)

2 60-010 OLD CHAP 13 P Gilligan 5-11-11 J G Gairford (7)

3 40-302 PHILS CHOICE 79 P J Rothwell 6-11-11 S D Torrens

4 30P-61 LONDOFFICECALLUN F49 (T) E McNamara 6-11-8 C P McNamara

5 U02-62 WALK OUT 13 John E & Kiely 5-11-8 Aidan Kelly (5)

6 /603P- POUR THE WINE 379 Peter Fahy 7-11-6 E A Fitzgerald (7)

7 00-404 ON MY BIKE 34 G Cromwell 4-11-0 K M Donoghue

8 4-F003 TOOR NOON 45 Ms M Flynn 6-11-1 C Brassil (5)

9 000-P MINNIE BEETS 44 G Elliott 5-11-0 J Gairford

10 462000 KEEFFLEE 9 (P) Miss J M Lee 9-10-13 R A Doyle

11 00-002 WILL IT BE YOU 51 (P) P Cusack 6-10-9 R Deegan

### 12 P0-00P COPPERCAST PAUDIE 5 Ms M Flynn 10-10-7 E M O'Sullivan (7)

13 P00-00 NICOLES GETAWAY 20 (T) S Ahern 5-10-7 M P O'Connor (3)

14 000-02 OH'HEREWEGO 9 V T O'Brien 14-10-7 P T Enright

15 20-064 ROSSIES TARA 20 (T) M McNiff 7-10-7 D King (3)

Betting: 3-1 Londonofficecallun, 9-2 Phils Choice, 6-1 Walk Out, 7-1 Will It Be You, 8-1 Toor Noon, Rossies Tara, 10-1 Oh'herewego, On My Bike

### 4.10 FREE STREAMING ALL RACING AT TOTE.IE HANDICAP CHASE

1 2-4363 BYTHESMETOKEN 9 (P,T) R O'Sullivan 9-12-0 K M Donoghue

2 4/5-13 WHATSARELLATODD 62 Richard Daniels 10-11-1 E M O'Sullivan (7)

3 0656-6 MARVEL FAN 150 (T,D) A J Martin 7-11-5 C Brassil (5)

4 00060 FILON D'OUADIRIES 9 J P Broderick 8-11-3 C G O'Dwyer (3)

5 002002 JACK HOLIDAY 37 (P,D) J F Gleeson 9-11-1 P Byrnes (5)

6 316133 RICKY LANGFORD 15 (P,C,D) P J Rothwell 9-11-0 S D Torrens

7 /6603-3 ARDAMIR 16 (P,T) Rothwell 11-10-9 P J O'Hanlon (5)

8 603P- POUR THE WINE 379 Peter Fahy 7-11-6 E A Fitzgerald (7)

9 00-404 ON MY BIKE 34 G Cromwell 4-11-0 K M Donoghue

10 4-F003 TOOR NOON 45 Ms M Flynn 6-11-1 C Brassil (5)

11 000-P MINNIE BEETS 44 G Elliott 5-11-0 J Gairford

12 462000 KEEFFLEE 9 (P) Miss J M Lee 9-10-13 R A Doyle

13 00-002 WILL IT BE YOU 51 (P) P Cusack 6-10-9 R Deegan

### 3 201252 TULLYHOQUE FORT 20 (BF) John F O'Neill 7-11-9 Mr P J O'Neill (7)

4 0-0643 AVEC ESPOIR 8 (D) V T O'Brien 10-11-7 G B Noonan (5)

5 /00-06 WILLIAM OF WYKHAM 30 (P,T) M McNiff 8-11-7 P T Enright

6 -21603 MOVIE KING 15 (T) A J Martin 6-11-1 Mr B Noonan (7)

7 -05105 STEPS MATCH 37 (P) M Butler 8-11-1 K Buckley (3)

8 P0014 DEFINITEADARE 8 (BF,C,D) Charles Coakley 9-11-0 D J O'Keefe

9 225231 GLENMALLURE LODGE 16 (P,D) P J Rothwell 9-11-0 P J O'Hanlon (5)

10 2042P2 LIKABLE CHANCER 9 (B,T) D Howard 9-10-11 D King (3)

11 0005-4 DEFINITELY DARS! 16 C Collins 8-10-9 J Gairford

Betting: 7-2 Glenmallure Lodge, 4-1 Tullyhoque Fort, 5-1 AVEC Espoir, 6-1 Likable Chancer, 13-2 Lesh Oscars Son, 7-1 Definiteadare, 12-1 Steps Match, Movie King

### 5.20 FITZGERALD'S WOODLANDS HOUSE HOTEL HANDICAP

1 0-3113 CEANNDANA 16 (P,BF) R O'Sullivan 6-11-12 K M Donoghue

2 -0P01-1 HUTCHIE 20 Stephen Gerard Carey 7-11-12 R A Doyle

3 5002-2 READ TO RETURN 6 (T,BF) A J Martin 6-11-5 P T Enright

4 1100-3 BATTLE AWAY 36 R O'Sullivan 10-11-5 D J O'Keefe

5 P0-030 COCO LIGHTNING 73 P P O'Connor 6-11-5 S Fenealon (7)

6 -00432 GAME AND GLORY 39 (P) P J Rothwell 7-11-5 P J O'Hanlon (5)

7 -200P5 TOWNHILL PENNY 16 (P) G Elliott 7-11-5 J Gairford

Betting: 7-4 Read To Return, 5-2 Ceanndana, 5-1 Townhill Penny, 13-2 Battle Away, 8-1 Game And Glory, 20-1 Coco Lightning, Hutchie

### Tipperary

Going: flat: soft to heavy; nh: soft-yielding in places

1 (5) 5 BRAVE AND BOLD 19 A P O'Brien 9-7 K K Hennessy (5)

2 (1) 6 DEL POSTO 11 Harrington 9-7 S T McCullagh (3)

3 (9) 5 HYPNOSIS 28 A P O'Brien 9-7 J A Heffernan

4 (2) 66 NAVAJO SCOUT 19 M Meade 9-7 C T Keane

5 (8) 6 NINE LIVES Donaghua O'Brien 9-7 M R Ryan

6 (6) 6 PUENTE ROMANO (T) P O'Brien 9-7 D McDonogh

7 (3) 003 RAPID MISSION 16 P J O'Brien 9-7 R P Foley

8 (4) 4 SOUND MOVIE 5 Bolger 9-7 R P Cleary

9 (17) 4 TONE OUTSIDERE 19 Leonard Flynn 9-7 L T McKeary

10 (10) 3 ZAPHOD 10 Adam Caffrey 9-7 R Whelan

Betting: 11-4 Rapid Mission, 4-1 Hypnosis, 11-2 Puente Romano, 6-1 Sound Move, 7-1 Brave And Bold, 10-1 Del Posto, Nine Lives, 16-1 Navajo Scout, Timeoutsound, 33-1 Zaphod

### 2.10 FITZGERALD'S WOODLANDS HOUSE HOTEL HANDICAP

1 (3)000000 SALTONTALL 12 (P,T,C,D) A McGuinness 9-10-2 Adam Caffrey (5)

2 (4) 22115 CRISTAL CLEO 12 (BF) J Nallen 5-10-1 C Stone-Walsh (7)

3 /912-4000 YEMANTHEREE 27 (BF,D) A Kinirons 5-9-7 R Colgan

4 /3020140 CLUONMACNA 14 (P,D) J P Murtagh 3-9-5 B M Coen

5 /0020400 CASANOVA 12 (D) A McGuinness 7-9-13 C J MacRedmond (5)

6 /535-002 MIDGAM 18 A McGuinness 4-9-11 R Whelan

7 (1) 155341 SAVE YOUR LOVE 47 (T,D) J P Murtagh 3-9-9 B M Coen

8 /00-06 WILLIAM OF WYKHAM 30 (P,T) M McNiff 8-11-7 P T Enright

9 /00-06 WILLIAM OF WYKHAM 30 (P,T) M McNiff 8-11-7 P T Enright

10 /0012160 BOOYEA 21 (D) T Gilbey 3-8-13 G M Ryan

11 /0025402 INDEPENDENT EXPERT 10 A Slattery 4-8-13 A J Slattery

12 /70-5605 WALHAAN 2 Claran Murphy 7-8-12 S Foley

13 /80330054 NEW HILL 18 S Lavery 5-8-7 W Joyce (7)

Betting: 4-1 Simply Sideways, 5-1 Laughliffwant, 6-1 Cristal Cleo, 7-1 Trachonitus, Saltontall, 10-1 Independent Expert, Save Your Love, 12-1 New Hill, Casanova, Migdam

### 2.40 COOLMORE SIOUX NATION CONCORDE STAKES (LISTED)

€25,500; 7F 100YDS (11)

1 /6031535 CASANOVA 12 (D) A McGuinness 7-9-13 C J MacRedmond (5)

2 /71-14300 INSINUENDO 21 W McCreery 6-9-9 C T Keane

3 /8120312 DUNUM 22 (BF,D) N Lupini 5-9-7 J A Heffernan

4 /40-0001 MAUD GONNE SPIRIT 12 (P,D) J Harrington 6-9-7 S Foley

5 /9530322 MIRAMIS 12 (D) J P O'Brien 5-9-7 Doubtful

6 /1000242 SNAPRAETREA 5 (D) P O'Brien 5-9-7 D McDonogh

7 /932-4000 YEMANTHEREE 27 (BF,D) A Kinirons 5-9-7 R Colgan

8 /3020140 CLUONMACNA 14 (P,D) J P Murtagh 3-9-5 B M Coen

9 /11 22154 BELLS ON HER TOES 28 (V,D) A Slattery 4-9-4 A J Slattery

10 /51-0006 STATEMENT 5 (CD) J P O'Brien 5-9-4 MP Sheehy

11 /22-0426 KEEP IN TOUCH 12 (B,D) K K Weld 3-9-2 C D Hayes

Betting: 7-2 Dunum, 9-2 Bells On Her Toes, 5-1 Cosmic Vega, 6-1 Snapraetrea, 13-2 Insinuendo, 10-1 Maud Gonne Spirit, Keep In Touch, Statement

### 3.15 BOYLESPODES