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Man United's

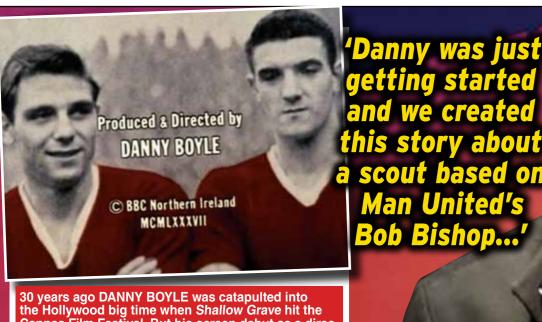
Bob Bishop..

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IRELAND V WALES

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Cannes Film Festival. But his screen debut as a direc tor came seven years earlier with a football film set in the Mourne Mountains called Scout. Sports Editor DAVID COUGHLAN goes in search of a cult classic.

### IT began in County Down.

Boyle's opening shot was not of Edinburgh, there was no Leftfield, no Iggy Pop and no

on a quiet rural back road and Stephen Rea driving like a maniac while reciting the names of Brazil players from the 1970

### world Cup. "I don't remember a damn thing about it!" says Stephen Rea, laughing. "It was a very long time ago." "There was a man called Bob Cooper (at BBC Northern Ireland) who was very encourag-Rea, laughing.

"It was a very long time ago."
This is *Scout*, a cult football film first shown on BBC2 in September 1987 and the screen debut for Boyle.
The Lancashire filmmaker

already had a strong connection with Ireland — his mother Annie came from Ballinasloe and his father Frank was born in England to an Irish family.

The director would go on to nake iconic films like Shalow Grave, Trainspotting, The Beach, 28 Days Later and Slumdog Millionaire and produce the opening ceremony for the London 2012 Olympic Games.

And Trainspotting would get its first public viewing in Derry.
But it all began with a TV drana loosely based on legendary



wright Frank McGuinness.
And the first music used in a

Danny Boyle film was Get Over You by The Undertones. "Danny was just starting his

ing at putting together young directors and young writers at the time — as both Danny and myself were.

"We decided on this topic about a scout. We didn't want to bother Bob Bishop himself, we knew he was a very private man so we invented a story around that idea.

"And the young fellas who were in it were all first-timers, none of them had really worked in TV before."

### Direct

Boyle had recently started working for BBC NI and commissioned himself to direct Scout, despite having little experience behind the camera.
The real Bob Bishop was the scout who discovered George Best and alerted Manches-

ter United to players like Sammy McIlroy and Norman would bring a bunch of hopefuls to a pitch in Helen's Bay, County Down for trials and the dream of follow-ing in their footsteps.

In Scout, Bishop is represented by the formidable flat-cap-wearing character Palmer who imilarly takes six young players through their t a remote cottage in the Iourne Mountains.

"The great Ray McAnally played him and Ray was a great man for nvesting character with ittle secrets — byways nto how people worked," says McGuinness. "I had worked

with Ray on Observe the Sons of Ulster "He was the best teacher I ever worked with in theatre, he was a with him. He could be a difficult "in your future." gloriously good teacher and he took the lads under his wing.

"He really helped them as actors and they all respected him dearly. He was also great fun."

Rea fondly remembers working with McAnally, who was by then

with McAnally, who was by then enjoying a late career high after appearing alongside Robert de Niro in The Mission a year earlier and would later star in the Oscar-winning My Left Foot.

"I remember sitting in a make-up trailer with Ray McAnally when the lights went out," says Rea.

"Mich most people didn't have the energy to burst out of the Abbey, but he did."

Rea plays Marshall in Scout figure. The first glamour footballer, he's a bit too steady.

"McGrath was so intengence, which I thought was disappointing for me," he says, laughing.

"George was an extraordinary figure. The figure. The first glamour footballer. Poor old Marshall isn't a glamour footballer, he's a bit too steady.

"McGrath was so intengence, which I thought was disappointing for me," he says, laughing.

"McGrath was so intengence, which I thought was disappointing figure. The first glamour footballer, he's a bit too steady.

"Marshall was not Paul McGrath, although I suppose they both had problems with alcohol."

# Career

enly at the six young hopefuls, before shaking his head. "(No)

ence.
"Sometimes you get defenders like Paul McGrath. Paul McGrath was always a step ahead of what the attack-

Rea grew up in Belfast and formed the Field Day Theatre Company in 1980 with Brian Friel, before coming to international prominence in Neil Jordan's 1982 film Angel. He would go on to become one of the greatest actors of his ers were doing. I wouldn't generation on stage and screen, winning multiple prestigious awards and starring in mov-ies like *The Crying Game* and

# **Fascinated**

Michael Collins. One image of him as Ned Broy in *Michael Collins* has become a meme for any suggestion of see McGrath in his prime.

"McGrath was something else.
I remember seeing him in New

He pauses for extra drama.
"And how dare he play for England? I don't think I'll ever get over it," he adds.

reguson as well.

"He said, 'No, I won't go, I'm
Irish!' Honest to God, it's terrible
when a huge team starts to pinch
players like Grealish and Rice.
"I method. That was one subject
that was never allowed to be
mentioned. Religion did not
enter the discussion.

"I only met Bob once after
the film had been shown

McGuinness first came to prominence with his 1982 play *The Factory Girls* and has gone on to become one of Ireland's most celebrated writers, often tackling a clitical gristogte in his works.

"I was a huge Arsenal fan and still am really, except for the in"I was a huge Arsenal fan and still am really, except for the in-

on your ear," says the character Palmer in the film. McGuinness remembers writing it very deliberately: "That was very much Bob Bishop's method. That was one subject

in public. He was an extraordinarily impressive man, very neatly

could you look to than George Best?" says McGuinness.

THIS WAY LADS: Ray McAnally as Palmer in Danny Boyle's 1987 film Scout, leading the young Manche

"But I was more interested in

ing at UCD.

He worked with Boyle on ansurprised by the director's sub

"And everything Frank does is terribly interesting in so many ways. I've done a good bit of work with Frank. Always very "Even though we were young both Danny and myself, start good. I love his writing.

"I did a play of his in London and on Broadway about Brian

Rea received an Oscar nomination for his role in The Crying Game and has worked with McGuinness on numerous occasions since Scout including the Tony.

"It was his first film, we were learning, we made mistakes, we learned from mistakes, but he was exceptionally benevolent at

uv characte vas trouble

# Stephen Rea and Frank McGuinness recall defender, that's why he was called Marshall because he used to marshal the decult Irish football film with Danny Boyle

"But Ray was one of the Abbey actors who ended up having a great career outside the Abbey,

The character is seen drinking heavily throughout the film which provides obvious

parallels with George Best, but Rea sees it differently.

"He was troubled, but he wasn't like George Best, a staggeringly talented ball player... which I thought was disappointing for me "he says laughing"

Rea has long been fascinated by the beautiful game and was at both Italia '90 and USA '94 to

cultural appropriation by our neighbours across the water — including footballers. So what does the real Stephen Rea think?

"But what a player McGrath was. He was out of this world."

Rea grew up in Belfast and formed the Field Day Theatre Company in 1980 with Brian

Company in 1980 with Brian

Clusion of... Declan Rice,"he says with a huge amount of mischief.

"Because of his treachery in playing for Ireland and leaving before he qualified."

and three Protestants.

"That is the last time I will mention religion this weekend. If any of you start on it you're out on your ear," says the character

"They were trying to get Evan

players like Grealish and Rice. "It makes me mad." Writers

"When I went to London I had a season ticket for Arsenal. I loved Liam Brady, he was just marvellous. What a player.

"The description with the solution of the body statement of the solution of the body statement with the solution of the body sta

As for Marshall, he admits there were elements of Best in the word elements of Best in the word in the

"If you want to write about a footballer failing through his weakness for the drink, who else was a footballer failing through his weakness for the drink, who else since then, Danny Boyle.

### Interested

Bob Bishop, the scout himself and in the lads."

— including the Tonynominated Someone
Who'll Watch Over Me
which was loosely based it's better than being in Straexperiences bane'. of Brian Keenan in cap-

n Keenan in capn Keenan in capAlthough he has

"Every night when you said that, even in New York where nobody had ever been to Strabane, the time.

yet to work it was a show-stopper."

w i t h McGuinness is currently Emerto go very far.

Completely

ing out, we knew enough not to blow the gig completely," says

was a hard taskmaster.

"He knew what he was doing