

# ARTS/CULTURE

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Arts/Culture Editor: Des O'Driscoll

## Showing his talents as Mr Ripley

SCREEN SCENE

Esther McCarthy



Irish star Andrew Scott looks is set to add to his impressive CV with the lead role in a major new Netflix series

HE starred in one of the year's most profoundly moving films, *All of Us Strangers*, and won praise for bringing Uncle Vanya to the London stage. Now Andrew Scott continues an impressive run of work by giving audiences a fresh take on one of the most iconic characters of them all. Since US novelist Patricia Highsmith first brought Tom Ripley to life in a series of novels, the shrewd criminal and con-artist has enthralled readers and audiences alike. Over the years, actors including Alain Delon, John Malkovich and Matt Damon have brought Ripley to the screen. Now the Dublin actor takes a deep dive into Ripley in a new series for Netflix — and characteristically makes the role his own. Not only does Scott take on an American accent for the role — impressively, he learned to speak Italian to play the character, who moves to the Mediterranean in the late 1950s.

"I had a wonderful Italian teacher and learned it for three or four months before we started just so you could understand it. It's a beautiful language to speak. And then of course, when you're around it, you become more interested in it," says Scott.

"It's one of the things you have to get used to a little bit as an actor — you've got to become really adept at something for a particular period, and then you have to move on to something else. I love that about acting, actually. But I'll try to keep it, I'm going to go back to Italy this year."

Scott has given us a Ripley for the ages in the suspenseful series. It's written and directed by Steven Zaillian, whose previous screenwriting credits include *Schindler's List*, *The Irishman* and *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*.

Zaillian brings Hitchcockian levels of tension to the storytelling, shot in black and white and striking in its

attention to detail. "It's the most extraordinary character and we spend so much time inside his mind and inside his world," says Scott of taking on *Ripley*.

"I think that's what's remarkable about it. Sometimes in a television series where there's eight hours of this, it might be about a couple, or a police department, or a family, or a hospital. This is really based on one person. We spend so much time with this guy, the character's in 95% of the eight hours, that's an awful lot of time to spend with one character."

"And so the challenge of it is to not blot the copybook too much in relation to how wonderful the mystery of the man is, as well as what we do know about him, which is that he is an enduring character that people love. But I think the questions about him, and his mysteriousness and his secretiveness, are a reason that he's so fascinating to play."

Understandably, he opted not to watch other performances depicting Tom Ripley, though he had seen Alain Delon in *Purple Noon* and Matt Damon in *The Talented Mr Ripley* years previously.

"I love both those versions for different reasons. It's happened before in relation to Shakespearean characters, you think: 'Oh, I don't want to see that'. You want to be able to put your own stamp on it."

"I was very lucky because I received the full eight hours of scripts, a big pile of scripts to read, which is very unusual for an actor. You usually get maybe one or two episodes. I had the whole thing mapped out and I knew immediately how extraordinarily written they were and sparsely written."

"I love the film noir-ish element to it. It's absolutely exquisite to look at and I love the opaqueness of playing this character. It felt like a real departure for me."

The series was shot in New York and various glamorous locations throughout Italy including Rome,



Andrew Scott as Ripley in the upcoming Netflix series; right, Scott in a scene with co-stars Dakota Fanning and Johnny Flynn.



Capri, the Amalfi Coast and Palermo, as Scott's Tom Ripley travels to Europe to seek out an old acquaintance, the wealthy and privileged Dickie Greenleaf (Johnny Flynn).

As a boy, a shy Scott took up acting classes and quickly fell in love with the craft — playing the Tin Man in one of his first ever performances.

Years later, he went on to star in several Irish dramas including *Jimmy's Hall* and *Handsome Devil*. He gave us the villainous Moriarty in a TV adaptation of *Sherlock* and the legendary 'hot priest' in *Fleabag*.

"I think we all as human beings want to do something that's of use to other people," he says of his career.

"You want to do something that's useful in the world. I suppose I appreciate more now, how much this can be of use to people, and how it genuinely helps."

"I do feel like I try to force myself sometimes into appreciating that what I do can be of use to people and it's not a frivolous thing, because I know that actors and artists of all different persuasions have really helped me."

There have been many memorable screen performances from the Irish actor, but theatre is at the very heart of what he does, and his recent successes include an award-winning run of *Vanya*, which also screened widely in cinemas.

"It's just like injecting the atmosphere straight into your veins," he says of live performance. "You don't wait

around — you're the chief artist, if I'm honest, as an actor. In the theatre, you're in charge."

"If the audience is getting bored, it's your job to pick the pace up, it's your job to be sort of all seeing, and there's nothing like that. If you don't exercise those muscles, you lose them and I don't want to lose them. I find it just the purest form of storytelling. *Vanya* was exhilarating, and exhausting, and all the things."

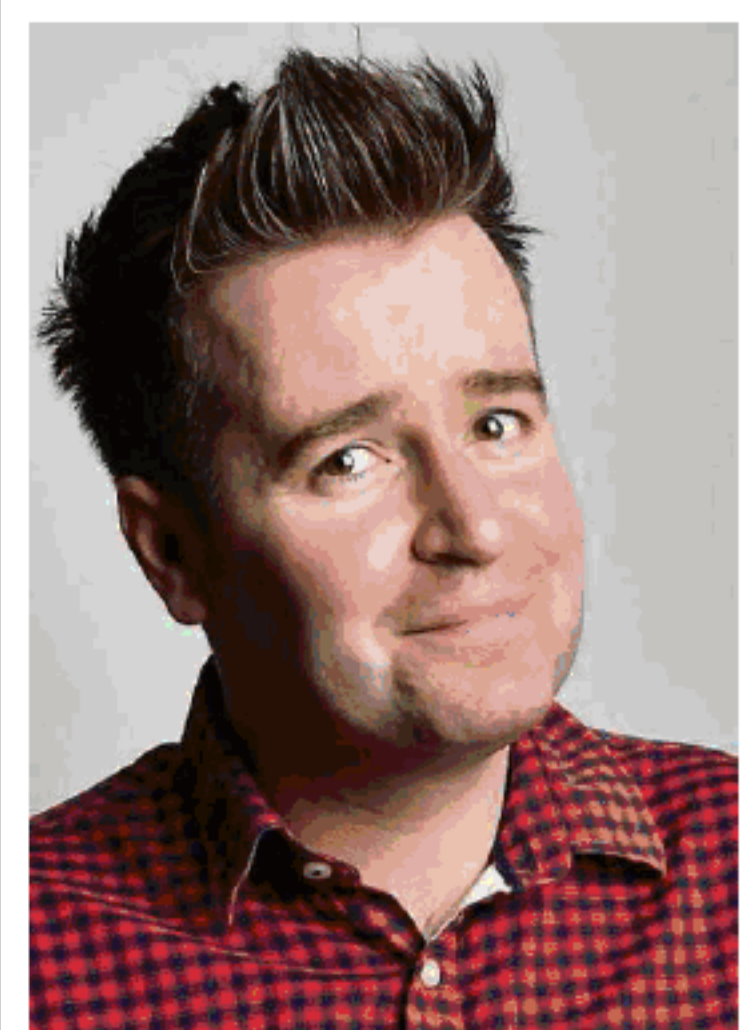
Scott brought audiences one of the finest screen performances of the year in *All of Us Strangers*, which audiences are falling in love with on streaming services following its successful cinema run.

He and his friend and co-star Paul Mescal entertained fans with their

banter while publicising the film. "It's been extraordinary," says Scott of the film's reception. "I'm still processing that actually, how affecting the film was for people. I suppose I understand for my own personal reasons more now why it affected people so much."

"I did that project with people that I really love — Paul especially. And when we brought it back to Ireland it was completely magical for both of us. It was very, very special. I'm very grateful to have just been part of it, not just the film, but the process and the reception and everything about it."

■ *Ripley* comes to Netflix from Thursday, April 4. [www.netflix.com/Ripley](http://www.netflix.com/Ripley)



Comedy: Jarlath Regan: *Yer Man The Everyman*, Cork, Thurs, April 4 & Fri, April 5

The always hilarious Jarlath Regan brings his latest tour to Cork next week. Best known for his long-running *Irishman Abroad* podcast, he has built up a global fanbase over the years. His latest show sees him doing what he does best — finding the humour and joy in the little things in life. From the mundane to the outrageous to the typically Irish, his act has something for everyone. Twenty years into his comedy career, Regan is much more than just yer man — he's a gem in Ireland's comedy crown.

Theatre: *The Pigeon Factory* Cork Arts Theatre, Carroll's Quay, Thursday, March 4 - Saturday, April 6

Aaron O'Neill presents his one-man show with Oh!Scare Wilde Productions in which he plays Walden. Now, Walden has a pretty good life, he can't really complain. But can he though? He is happily married to his mannequin wife and works his pigeon children into the ground. Everything is ticking along nicely and yet, Walden feels an emptiness inside that he just can't shake. This quirky play, written by O'Neill premiered at Cork Midsummer Festival last year.

### ON YOUR RADAR

## 5 HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD



Gig: Music for Gaza Benefit Vicar Street, Dublin, Thursday, April 4

Since the escalation of the situation in Gaza, Irish artists have been stepping up one after another to do what they can to help the people of Palestine. Head along and you can catch some of Ireland's top acts including OXN and Junior Brother. They will be joined by the likes of Pretty Happy and Kurdish/Syrian musician Mohammad Syfkan. All proceeds to Medical Aid for Palestine.



DJ: Felix Da Housecat Cyprus Avenue, Cork city, Friday, March 29

A pioneer of the electroclash genre, Felix Da Housecat has been constantly evolving his sound over the years. Always guaranteed to give you something new, fresh and unique, the Chicago native's live shows are not to be missed. Felix's sound is distinctive, he takes inspiration from all around and has remixed an eclectic list of artists such as Nina Simone, Garbage and Kylie Minogue. Since he first began DJing in the late 1980s, he has graced some of the world's biggest stages including Glastonbury, Coachella and Tomorrowland and now he's bringing his show to Cork city.



STREAMING: *Ripley* Netflix, Thursday, April 4

Andrew Scott stars as the titular character in this adaptation of *The Talented Mr Ripley*. The eight-episode series will drop all at once so you can binge at your will. Con man Tom Ripley will be joined in his Italian journey by playboy Dickie and his wealthy girlfriend Marge, played by Johnny Flynn and Dakota Fanning. The black-and-white suspense-filled series follows as grifter Ripley gets caught up in a world of deceit, fraud, and murder.

Michelle McGlynn

### Five takeaways from First Dates

1. If you don't want to see them again, maybe don't let them pay Time and time again over the course of this show, we have seen potential couples fall foul of the bill-splitting. As Irish people with a generational trauma around letting people do nice things for us, allowing somebody to pay for a meal brings most of us out in a rash. Often the wounds of bill-paying are assuaged by a simple: "Sure you can get the next one," and with that harmony is restored and the credit card is put away, despite all of us knowing that second date will most likely never materialise.

That being said, without naming names, if you have zero intention of seeing this person again, at least go splitsies.

2. In order to win big, you have to make yourself vulnerable Every participant who appeared on this show has opened themselves up in a way that is nothing short of admirable, none more so than Alex in episode 9 who admits that he hasn't as of yet come out to his Latvian family. When we learn he has done so since the show was recorded, and that he and his date Cillian have remained friends, it is a reminder that in order to win big, you have to make yourself vulnerable, and another reminder how important this show is for LGBTQ+ people and representation.

3. Some topics are best left for the second date "Are you an alcoholic yourself?" was a classic ice-breaker from Gary back in February when getting to know addiction-counsellor Oriel. Thankfully, she took it well, but other subjects we learned should be kept strictly off-limits would be the mention of serial killers, bowel movements, and even Tinder itself. Yes, when Gary's brother Anthony says anyone who is on 'Tinder' is "desperate", we fall through the floor with him when his Australian date Angie announces she herself is, surprise surprise, on 'Tinder'.

4. Ghosting someone is always a big no-no, but especially when it's on TV We were all rooting for Toni and Biff, each single-parents with the latter jokingly reassuring his glamorous date that he is working towards getting



Oriel and Gary on *First Dates Ireland* on RTE2, which is about to reach the end of its current season.

squatter's rights in his mam's gaff, and who doesn't love a guy with goals. Despite seemingly being perfect on paper, we all nearly dropped our flake when we heard Toni hadn't responded to Biff's calls and texts since the show. Toni owes neither Biff nor us anything at all, but as conflict-avoidant as we all are, it's always good to send that awkward text rather than instigate radio silence. Yes, you will probably have to bury your phone in the back garden for a few days with the cringe of it all, but if we've learned anything from this season, it is that honesty is certainly the best policy.

5. Love is a numbers game, and somebody has to win the jackpot This season saw the return of Shez and Carla, a *First Dates* couple who have, since the show, seen the birth of their little girl, and who offer their profuse gratitude to the universe that they signed up for this much-adored dating show back in 2020, without which they admit they probably never would have found one another. It is a reminder as to why all of us put ourselves out there when it comes to love and dating — because though it involves great emotional courage, one day we might just strike it lucky.

Julie Jay