

William McIlvanney :

Living With Words



**An intimate and affectionate documentary portrait of
*'the godfather of tartan noir'***

**A CONNECTfilm production
For BBC Scotland**

**Filmed and directed by Maurice O'Brien
Produced by Gill Parry**

PRESS PACK

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William McIlvanney : Living With Words

Short Synopsis

William McIlvanney is one of Scotland's greatest and most enigmatic writers, responsible for seminal books such as 'Docherty' and 'Laidlaw'. At 77 he is still effortlessly cool, sporting the iconic good looks of Clark Gable. This is a powerful, funny and intimate portrayal of the writer as he looks back at his life.

Long Synopsis

William McIlvanney is one of Scotland's greatest and most enigmatic writers. His seminal novel 'Docherty' was recently voted in the top ten Scottish novels of all time, and his Glasgow detective 'Laidlaw' inspired a whole generation of crime writers, earning him the mantle 'Godfather of Tartan Noir'. At 77 he is still effortlessly cool, sporting the iconic good looks of Clark Gable. This is a powerful, funny and intimate portrayal of the writer as he looks back at his life - and the surprise of his 'rebirth' as his work is rediscovered once more by a new generation.

Longer Synopsis

William McIlvanney is one of Scotland's greatest and most enigmatic writers. His seminal novel 'Docherty' was recently voted in the top ten Scottish novels of all time... His Glasgow detective 'Laidlaw' inspired a whole generation of crime writers, earning him the mantle 'Godfather of Tartan Noir'.

This film gives us some of the heavyweights of Scottish culture and literature; Ali Smith, David Hayman and Ian Rankin among others pay homage to McIlvanney's influence. And William's brother, acclaimed sports writer Hugh McIlvanney, also makes an appearance as the two reminisce about their childhood growing up in Kilmarnock, where "being hard was important, but the importance of the word" was dominant.

At 77 William McIlvanney is still effortlessly cool, sporting the iconic good looks of Clark Gable. This is a powerful, funny and intimate portrayal of the writer as he looks back at his life, and the surprise of his 'rebirth' after his work went out of print, as his work is rediscovered once more by a new generation.

William McIlvanney Biography

William McIlvanney was born in the town of Kilmarnock, the son of a miner. His first book, *Remedy is None*, was published in 1966 and won the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize. *Docherty* (1975), a moving portrait of a miner whose courage and endurance is tested during the depression, won the Whitbread Novel Award. His novels feature tough, often violent, men locked in a struggle with their own nature and background.

His novel, *The Kiln* (1996), is the story of Tam Docherty, the grandson of the hero of *Docherty*. It won the Saltire Society Scottish Book of the Year Award. *Laidlaw* (1977), *The Papers of Tony Veitch* (1983) and *Strange Loyalties* (1991) are crime novels featuring Inspector Jack Laidlaw. *Laidlaw* is considered to be the first book of Tartan Noir.

William McIlvanney is also an acclaimed poet, and is the author of *The Longships in Harbour: Poems* (1970) and *Surviving the Shipwreck* (1991). After a period when his work was unavailable, William McIlvanney's work has been republished by Canongate, starting with *Laidlaw*, *The Papers of Tony Veitch* and *Strange Loyalties* in 2013.

Director Biography – Maurice O'Brien

Maurice is a documentary filmmaker whose work includes the films 'Northern Soul: Keeping the Faith' and 'Tom Wood: What do Artists do All Day?', as well as numerous films for the BBC's Culture Show. His award-winning short 'Buffalo Dreams' (produced with the Scottish Documentary Institute) has screened at festivals all over the world. Originally from Ireland he has been mainly based in Glasgow for the last seven years.

Producer Biography - Gill Parry

Gill Parry is a documentary producer, who loves making films and telling true stories with real people. She's been lucky enough to work with some amazing, talented and extraordinary human beings over the years, and has helped make a few films happen. She has loved (almost) every minute of it. Everything's worth it for those few great moments – on location in Iraq the sun setting behind the mountains, laughing her ass off in a NY apartment with a stoned jazz diva... All in all, it's been a good journey... to be continued.



Contributors:

William McIlvanney
Hugh McIlvanney
Ali Smith
Ian Rankin
David Hayman
Siobhan Lynch
Neil McIlvanney
Robbie MacInnes

Filmed and Directed by
Produced by
Executive producer
Edited by
Camera

Maurice O'Brien
Gill Parry
Pauline Law
Berny McGurk
Fraser Rice

Quotes:

Pauline Law, executive producer for BBC Scotland, says: "I'm delighted BBC Scotland was able to commission this film which beautifully captures the important contribution William McIlvanney has made to Scottish culture and his influence on contemporary crime writing."

Allan Hunter, co-director of the Glasgow Film Festival, says: " William McIlvanney: Living With Words offers a fond, insightful portrait of one of our greatest writers. It captures a real sense of his professional achievements and private doubts but also the regard in which he is held by fellow writers and the wider public. His integrity and vulnerability shine through in equal measure. It also leaves you wanting to savour once again every single thing he has written."

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World premiere - Glasgow Film Festival 23 February 6pm

First UK broadcast - BBC2 Scotland 27 February 10pm