

BBC Worldwide

Ballykissangel

Series 2

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8 x 50 minutes

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BBC Worldwide

Ballykissangel

Series 2

The popular, award-winning series about the dramas and absurdities of life in a picturesque rural Irish town

Drama Series

8 x 50 minutes

Ballykissangel

Series 2

General Synopsis

Kieran Prendiville's smash-hit, highly acclaimed drama returns for a second series, with all the regular cast. The outstanding success of *Ballykissangel* took everyone by surprise, with audiences reaching an amazing rating of 15 million by only the third episode of the first series. And Avoca (the real name of the village in County Wicklow in which *Ballykissangel* is set) has become a major tourist attraction, with coachloads of visitors from around the world.

In this series, Father Peter Clifford is now firmly established in the County Wicklow village, despite Father Mac's efforts to have him sent back to Manchester, England. However, feelings between him and the beautiful bar-owner Assumpta Fitzgerald, are threatening to lead into forbidden waters, especially when he has to stand in as the romantic male lead in Brendan's play.

Newly-weds Niamh and Ambrose, meanwhile, are learning all about the pleasure and pain of trying to become parents.

Local bigshot, Brian Quigley, is still getting up to all kinds of dodgy, get-rich-quick schemes, but finds it impossible to keep his dealings to himself in such a small village – especially as he employs arch-idiots Liam and Donal to do his dirty work.

Schoolmaster Brendan faces unexpected trouble in this series – from redundancy and then from an intake of unruly pupils from another school. Kathleen too has her problems. But help comes from unexpected quarters.

So why not join the locals propping up the bar at Fitzgerald's. This new series of *Ballykissangel* promises plenty of drama and crises, but also a great deal of fun and laughter.

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Regular Cast List

Father Peter Clifford.	Stephen Tompkinson
Assumpta Fitzgerald	Dervla Kirwan
Brian Quigley.	Tony Doyle
Ambrose Egan.	Peter Hanly
Niamh Egan.	Tina Kellegher
Father MacAnally.	Niall Toibin
Brendan Kearney.	Gary Whelan
Siobhan Mehigan.	Deirdre Donnelly
Padraig O'Kelly	Peter Caffrey
Liam Coghlan	Joe Savino
Donal O'Docherty	Frankie McCafferty
Eamon Byrne.	Birdy Sweeney
Kathleen.	Áine Ní Mhuirí
Doctor Michael Ryan	Bosco Hogan
Kevin O'Kelly.	John Cleere
Enda O'Sullivan.	Stephen Brennan

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Production Credits

Series Created by **Kieran Prendiville** (*Roughnecks, Badger*)

Written by **Kieran Prendiville**
John Forte (*Henri*)
Rio Fanning
Niall Leonard
Jo O'Keefe

Directors **Paul Harrison** (Episodes 1-4)
Dermot Boyd (Episodes 5-8)

Producer **Chris Griffin** (*Preston Front*)

Executive Producers **Robert Cooper** (BBC)
Tony Garnett (World Productions)

A Ballykea Production for World Productions for BBC Northern Ireland

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Characterisations

Stephen Tompkinson (Father Peter Clifford)

Stephen Tompkinson could be forgiven for counting his blessings.

In the space of a year, he landed the pivotal role in *Ballykissangel*, helped to make the BBC series a runaway Sunday night success, and fell in love with his leading lady. Getting the part of Father Peter Clifford was, he says, a dream come true. Seeing the ratings top 15 million was beyond his wildest expectations. As for romance... more of that later.

"The vibe was very good while we were shooting the first series because the scripts gave us such a good foundation to build on," says Stephen. "No one has really been able to put their finger on why everything clicked, but to get such huge public and critical acclaim was great. One paper described us as, 'the best television repertory company ever assembled,' and who are we to argue?" he smiles. "I think the viewers were left wanting more after the first run."

The second series finds Father Peter firmly settled into life in the small Irish town of Ballykissangel, County Wicklow. "He's less of a fish out of water and much more a member of the community now," says Stephen. "He still gets side-footed by various people, but he's not as green as he was. He's stronger all round, I think, and more determined when problems arise.

"He's also more confident in his dealings with Father MacAnally, more willing to fight his corner. Father Mac isn't the villain of the piece; he's just a man of his generation, just as Peter is a product of his, so the two will always clash on certain issues."

The friendship between Father Peter and Assumpta Fitzgerald continues to develop, with the sexual chemistry between priest and pub landlady still simmering gently. "They have to get quite intimate when Peter has to step into a role in an amateur production opposite Assumpta, so the plot thickens, as it were," smiles Stephen. "But I'll leave it at that and keep viewers dangling."

He admits that Peter and Assumpta's relationship in the second series will have an added frisson for viewers, given the fact that he and Dervla are partners in real life. "If you believe everything you read in the papers, we've been married, divorced, bought about three houses and had children – all of which has been news to us," Stephen laughs.

The friendship, which developed between the pair as they worked closely together on the first series gradually, blossomed into something more serious.

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Characterisations

Stephen Tompkinson (continued)

"We didn't really get together until after we'd finished filming," Stephen recalls. "We didn't want it to be a 'holiday romance' which would be all over as soon as the job was finished, so we waited a while.

"Neither of us had been out with other members of the profession before. I think we'd both made a conscious effort not to, because everyone knows the pitfalls and has heard all the horrendous stories.

"But we were obviously still interested in each other, so just before I went off to Doncaster for eight weeks to work on my first movie, *Brassed Off*, I asked Dervla if she'd go out with me. So she did, and we've been blissfully happy ever since."

Even the dogged interest of the tabloid newshounds has failed to spoil things for the couple. "They have done things like follow my ex-wife to the shops and camp out on her doorstep, only for her to reveal the shock-horror story that she's met with Dervla," smiles Stephen.

"Things have been blown out of proportion by the amount of coverage we have had, but I suppose that is to be expected because the ratings for *Ballykissangel* were so high. You suddenly become public property, but the reaction has been so warm that it has not been a problem."

Their relationship has, he stresses, changed nothing on the friendly set of *Ballykissangel*. "I do not think it has changed the chemistry between Peter and Assumpta at all," he claims. "Dervla is as steeped in her character as I am in mine, and, hopefully, we are both good enough actors to not let it interfere. As far as we are concerned, the work and 'us' are two entirely different things, and the 'us' is very much put on the backburner when we are working.

"The rest of the cast and crew pin up whatever front page or centre spread about us they come across, and laugh themselves stupid about it, but that is as far as it goes. No one's attitude has changed in the slightest."

Has playing Father Peter changed the former altar boy, who still attends Mass?

"He's a bit too much to live up to sometimes," laughs Stephen, who is also famous for playing ruthless reporter Damien Day in *Drop the Dead Donkey*.

"Damien is the other side of the coin completely from Father Peter, so I think I am somewhere in between the two of them, trying to stay sane. There are elements of each somewhere in my own personality.

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Characterisations

Stephen Tompkinson (continued)

"One of the things people seem to like about Peter is that he does not pretend to have all the answers. He never has an ideal solution, but hopefully he can offer a few more options than the traditional point of view within the Church allows, and encourage people to think more for themselves.

"I have had letters from priests, and not just Roman Catholic ones, who say they believe in my portrayal and think *Ballykissangel* puts across the sort of struggles the clergy can have with their faith.

"They say it is very believable, and their basic message seems to be 'keep up the good work', which I think is fantastic. Praise indeed."

And, of course, the general public has also been full of admiration for the series, turning Avoca (the real name of the village in County Wicklow in which *Ballykissangel* is set) into a major tourist destination.

"It's amazing. There were as many as 20 coachloads a day passing through when we were filming this series, plus all the people in cars, but they were all very good about letting us get on with it," says Stephen.

"Mind you, writers' cramp was setting in after a while because of all the autographs I was asked for, and I think the show should be sponsored by Kodak, given the amount of snaps (photographs) people were taking."

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Characterisations

Dervla Kirwan (Assumpta Fitzgerald)

Fiery Assumpta Fitzgerald's talent for intimidation goes before Dervla Kirwan when she is out and about.

"I find it extraordinary, the reaction I get," smiles Dervla, who after Series 1 was voted Most Popular Actress by the viewing public in the National Television Awards. "People don't quite know how to handle me and they never say anything out of order, which is really nice, and I think it is because Assumpta is quite a fierce character."

Dervla shares some of Assumpta's intensity, but she will not allow the comparison to be taken too far.

"She is not me. When you play a part in your own accent, perhaps you have less to hide behind and you bring in more of your own experiences, or characteristics of yourself, but you are still not that person."

Perhaps maintaining the distinction between fiction and reality is not so easy, however, when Dervla is seen with fellow *Ballykissangel* star, Stephen Tompkinson. Their real-life romance has been the object of intense media interest.

"We tried to handle it in the best way that we could, and we certainly were not going to deny going out with each other, but how do you balance it all?" asks the Dublin-born actress.

"You are basically public property – that's the deal when 15 million people watch your show every week. But you can still create a little world for yourself and protect your privacy within it."

The couple decided to pre-empt the tabloids by confirming their relationship on Patrick Kielty's live Friday night Northern Ireland show, *PK Tonight*, followed by an appearance together on *The Gaby Roslin Show*.

"It was a way of saying, We have nothing to hide. We're quite normal, now forget all about it."

Dervla agrees, however, that she and Stephen have to guard against being seen as some sort of double-act.

"That is a danger, but Stephen does *Drop the Dead Donkey*, among other things, and I've now left the BBC comedy *Goodnight Sweetheart* to give myself a chance to do different stuff.

"But what's the problem anyway? We are just two individuals, two actors, who happen to be going out together."

Nevertheless, they are two actors playing characters with a definite sexual spark between them.

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Characterisations

Dervla Kirwan (continued)

"I think people can have the same level of on-screen sexual chemistry without going out with each other," Dervla insists.

"We were very lucky really, because the way *Ballykissangel* is written needs that chemistry between Assumpta and Peter to work, and our relationship just gives it an extra charge.

"But we're never blatantly affectionate while we're working, and nobody feels the need to give us space when they see Stephen and me together on set.

"Part of the reason the show works so well is the extraordinary sense of friendship amongst everyone involved, so nobody feels the need to treat us any differently now.

"Our relationship is important, but we do not bring it to work with us."

But surely living and working together must put a strain on it?

"Not at all," Dervla claims. "The only thing that puts us under pressure is our schedule. We are on set for about 13 hours a day, we go home very tired, we look at our lines for the next day, and that's it."

Assumpta remains one of *Ballykissangel's* most dynamic characters in this series, though some of her abrasiveness has softened somewhat where Father Peter is concerned.

"I think that is only natural because of the friendship and respect that has developed between them," says Dervla.

"But there always has to be an element of conflict. Series 3 explains that – why Assumpta has these hang-ups, why she is the woman she is – which is a real challenge for the writers."

The meeting of minds between priest and pub landlady has certainly captured the public's imagination, but Dervla adds, "That has been focused upon too much so far. It needs to be stressed that *Ballykissangel* is an ensemble piece, and all the other characters are vital to the show."

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Characterisations

Tony Doyle (Brian Quigley)

There are places where angels fear to tread, but not Brian Quigley.

"He knows no fear," declares Tony Doyle, who plays the roguish local kingpin in *Ballykissangel*. "If he sees the potential in some deal or other to make money, he goes for it and does not count the cost until it is all over. Quigley barges in where others might think twice, and he has done well for himself out of it. True, some of his more spectacular schemes have flopped, but at least they have been spectacular flops!"

Like his character, Tony tends to play his cards close to his chest, though the guarded side of his personality is leavened by a likable self-deprecating streak of humour.

Many a producer or director has taken advantage of his talent for portraying subtle menace or moral ambiguity over the years. He is, it has been said, Ireland's answer to Jack Nicholson.

"Others obviously see me very differently to how I see myself," he says with an amused stare. "People seems to see the dark side in me, or the dark side of themselves in me. I don't know which."

"Quigley's certainly an enigma, though he cracks a few jokes like some of the other characters I've played and definitely has his lighter side."

Ballykissangel's Mr Big is, of course, a widower. Would his wife be a restraint on his dodgy dealing if she were still around?

"No," Tony laughs, "I'm sure she would be pushing him on to greater heights. I think he was quite well-established before his wife died, but he has got a strong-willed daughter to keep an eye on him now."

Niamh shares many of her father's qualities. "They have got a very good relationship," says Tony. "It might not always appear to be so because they are quite tough with each other, but there is a very strong bond between them. You see that in this series, in a couple of scenes, where you see how close they really are. It is difficult to discuss that kind of blood tie, to define it. It just displays itself at difficult times, often tragic times, when families come together for each other."

"But Quigley likes the fact that Niamh stands up to him. He is pleased that she is the person she is because it means she is more than capable of looking after herself."

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Characterisations

Tony Doyle (continued)

"She seems to have married a man whom she can manage in Ambrose, who is the complete opposite of Quigley. Indeed, maybe that is why she chose him. She would not let anybody take advantage of Ambrose, and he is his own man in some ways, but he definitely wears the skirt when they are at home – though I don't mean that literally..."

The youngest of four children, Tony was born in County Roscommon, in the west of Ireland. He went to boarding school in Dublin when he was 12, and his family later relocated to the capital, but he remains a country boy at heart.

"To an extent, *Ballykissangel* has resonances for me of my own upbringing, except that everybody in it is much better off and has a much better time than I remember us having when we were growing up," he smiles. "No, I had a good time as a child, but we didn't have all the trappings of modernity that people have today. Most people got around on bicycles – there were certainly no Land Rover Discoveries in the vicinity that's for sure," he adds, referring to Quigley's preferred mode of transport.

Before *Ballykissangel*, Tony gained considerable recognition as the corrupt Chief Superintendent John Deakin in the BBC's hit police drama, *Between The Lines*, and as George Ferguson in Granada's *Band of Gold*. He has since appeared in the critically acclaimed BBC adaptation of the John McGahern novel *Amongst Women*, the feature film, *A Love Divided*, and the ITV series, *Four Fathers*. Though most of his impressive array of work has been in England, he has worked on and off in Ireland over the years and always enjoys acting in his native land.

"There is a very special atmosphere here, which is caring and embracing but also gives you space to actually do the work," he explains. "There is not that sense of colossal pressure you might get working in a city such as London. Of course, *Ballykissangel* is a big project, but because it is filmed here, there is still that special atmosphere which eases the pain of all the 14 or 15-hour days. The work gets done but everybody still enjoys each other's company.

"We are a bit like a very large, extended family, and hopefully, a lot of that special atmosphere, that quality, translates itself onto the screen."

It would certainly help to explain the enormous success of *Ballykissangel*.

"It seems that people are somehow bewitched and enchanted by the idea of this mythical village and these wonderful characters, but it is not all warmth and humour," Tony stresses. "*Ballykissangel* has the odd trauma and tragedy too. It does not avoid the more serious issues that hit you in the face from time to time, and most episodes chew over one serious subject or another."

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Peter Hanly (Ambrose Egan)

There must be something about Dublin's Berkeley Court Hotel that brings out the best in Peter Hanly.

The 31-year-old actor has landed not one, but two major roles after auditions there, making five-star impressions on both the producers of *Ballykissangel*, who offered him the role of Ambrose, and none other than Mel Gibson, who cast him as Prince Edward in his Oscar-winning epic, *Braveheart*.

The runaway success of both series and movie took the talented young Irish actor by surprise – especially in the case of the former. "We never imagined *Ballykissangel* would be so successful. It just seems to have touched a chord, and even some of my most cynical friends have told me they enjoyed it," he smiles.

Part of its appeal lies in the relationship between Ambrose, *Ballykissangel's* pensive local Garda (police) officer, and Niamh, the spoilt daughter of local wheeler-dealer, Brian Quigley. The odd couple's rollercoaster romance captivated viewers in the first series, and they finally married in the last episode.

"It is established at the start of the new series that they are trying for a baby," Peter explains. "Niamh gets quite scientific about it, so Ambrose is at her beck and call to 'do his duty', as the locals put it. Then the tone of that storyline changes.

"We have some quite serious stuff this time round and I think through that you get to see what the two characters have in common – love, loyalty and respect. We have already seen plenty of the contrast between them, so it is good to take things further and explore their relationship."

Ambrose is, of course, a rather serious-minded man. "He takes everything very seriously so he can be a bit prim and po-faced sometimes, which is why he deserves to have the mickey taken out of him to some extent. He's always worrying about what's the right thing to do, and he's overconscientious in terms of the law and his job. He tends to think the right way of doing something is the *only* way, though he does exhibit a bit more flexibility in this series.

"People have described him as gormless and naïve, and sometimes he is, but I have never wanted him to be a real 'eejit' (idiot). I'm aware that *Ballykissangel* is mainly for an English audience, so I do not want to play an *Irish* policeman as too much of a fool. Besides, Ambrose is Niamh's husband. She's no fool and I don't think she would have married one."

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Characterisations

Peter Hanly (continued)

The youngest of three children of a Dublin teacher, Peter was inspired to act at the age of 13, after seeing his brother performing in a school production of *Henry V*. "I had the desire but not the confidence," he recalls. "I did clerical jobs for two years after leaving school, but I was really just waiting to build up the courage to try and get into acting."

The confidence came after he joined the Dublin Youth Theatre, and Peter subsequently turned professional and made a name for himself on the Irish stage. In recent years, more screen work has come his way, including the aforementioned royal role in *Braveheart*.

"I was offered it after meeting Mel Gibson and a roomful of associate producers and casting people. Mel did not ask anyone to audition by reading from a script; he just wanted to meet and have a chat.

"It was a very exciting project to be involved in, though very ordinary in other ways. Mel is a very straightforward director, very good, very unpretentious. I really don't know how he found the energy to get up that early every morning for months on end, run around roaring with a sword all day and direct *and* co-produce. He was just totally focused and very professional."

Despite his recent successes, Peter has no plans to look elsewhere for work. "I'm a bit of a homebird when it comes to Dublin and Ireland," he admits. "I just find the quality of life here is very good."

He does not rule out making the move one day, however. "I am ambitious and I think I prefer screen work to the theatre. I think I am better at it and I would like to do more.

"But who knows?" he adds, with a smile. "I was on the dole for nearly five months after the first series of *Ballykissangel*, so I am taking nothing for granted."

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Characterisations

Tina Kellegher (Niamh Egan)

According to Tina Kellegher, Niamh Egan (née Quigley) is the Irish equivalent of an American Jewish princess.

"She has been spoilt rotten," declares the down-to-earth actress. "She is an only child, her mother has been dead for five or six years, and Quigley, her father, has expressed his love by giving her everything she wanted.

"They are both bullies; they see things their own way and want things their own way. Niamh is very like her daddy, and I think he likes to see himself in her – unless she is giving him a lot of stick about something."

Quigley got plenty of stick from his daughter in the first series of *Ballykissangel* over her on/off wedding to local Garda officer Ambrose. "He moaned about the expense, but really he would not have had it any other way," says Tina.

"He is very showy himself. I think the problem was he ended up paying twice because the wedding was called off first time, but Niamh insisted on still having the reception."

Best-known to viewers for her role as single mother-to-be Sharon in the BBC film version of Roddy Doyle's *The Snapper*, Tina begins this series of *Ballykissangel* with babies on her mind again. "My career is filled with them," she laughs. "Niamh is quite old-fashioned and traditional in some ways. She has not got any great ambitions and she does not want to get out there and prove herself as a whizzkid businesswoman.

"It was very important to her to acquire the status of a married woman, which she finally did in the first series. And now that she has the ring on her finger, the next step is having a child.

"It puts a lot of pressure on Ambrose, but it is really a big thing for her. That is why she gets very methodical about getting pregnant and takes to calling him home when the time is right to do the job.

"A friend of mine told me once that he was round at the house of a friend who was trying for a baby, and while they were chatting the wife called her husband upstairs to do his duty. Apparently, he said, it was like training for a marathon!"

Tina's own background is very different to Niamh's. One of six children, her father is a garage manager and is as honest as Quigley is crooked. "He is famous for it," says his daughter, with a smile. "When I was a kid, our bills were paid as soon as they came through the letterbox. I am quite like him. I believe I have his business brain, and we get on very well because I speak his language.

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Characterisations

Tina Kellegher (continued)

"Niamh has her disputes with her screen father, Brian Quigley, but she also fusses about him quite a bit. She will help him if she can, as long as what he is up to is legal, but she gives him a wide berth when he is doing something dodgy."

The first member of her family to go into acting (apart from an uncle who was an actor in Belfast), Tina served her apprenticeship at Galway's Druid Theatre.

"My mother is a great singer and would like to have been a professional, so she is delighted about what I have achieved so far," she says. "So is my father, now he knows I can earn a living. He was very anxious about the insecurity of the profession, but as soon as I started getting a wage at the Druid, he was happy enough. It's funny, but I knew it was going to happen for me. I don't know why; I just knew."

Tina's screen work has included the BBC dramas *The Hanging Gale* and the award-winning *Murder in Eden* (which also featured Tony Doyle), and roles in films such as *Widow's Peak* and *In the Name of the Father*. She won the Best Newcomer award at the Geneva Film Festival for her performance in *The Snapper*, was also nominated for British Actress of the Year by the London Film Critics' Circle.

But the popularity of *Ballykissangel* took her by surprise. "There was such a good buzz when we were working on the first series, but we never anticipated it would be so successful. The way *Ballykissangel* was cast said that the producers were not taking easy options. They wanted actors who were going to look for layers and complexities, and not just play it as broad comedy.

"My biggest anxiety was how an Irish audience would see it, but it has not been a problem. I think we have taken the clichéd images and set-ups and stood them on their heads."

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Characterisations

Naill Toibin (Father MacAnally)

They do not make priests like Father MacAnally any more, says Niall Toibin.

"There are very few of his breed left now," claims the veteran Irish star. "He is typical of an Irish parish priest of about 30 years ago, but there are still a handful of his age around who have not changed their ways.

"*Ballykissangel* is very much set in the present, but Father Mac's attitudes belong to the past. He is a conservative and a traditionalist, and he does not like having this 'liberation theologian' (as he calls Father Clifford) under his feet."

Father MacAnally cast many a contemptuous glare at the young Englishman in the first series, scorning his more enlightened approach. As he warned his idealistic junior on one occasion, "It is not part of our apostolate to be popular."

"I met my own parish priest in the street recently and he said, 'You are doing a great job as Father Mac, but I am afraid the days are long gone when you could treat your curate like that, as I know to my cost,'" Niall laughs.

"But Father Mac has a certain contempt for almost everyone around him, not just Father Clifford. He is also very intelligent, and manipulates Quigley, the local bigshot. He is quite prepared to use him and then, if necessary, to drop him in it.

"The pair of them have mutually beneficial arrangements but, in the end, it is always likely to be Quigley who is hung out to dry if things go wrong, while Father Mac walks away."

When Niall was growing up in Cork City, entering the priesthood was a common career choice for many young Irishmen, but he was never tempted to become a man of the cloth. "When I was a kid, every mother hoped that one of her family would become a priest, but mine never mentioned it to me," he recalls. "I had a younger brother who went to college, where there was more likelihood of being recruited, but he finished up as a Colonel in the US Army's Medical Corps."

Niall, who began his acting career in 1953 with RTE's Radio Repertory Theatre, decided that he wanted to be a performer at an early age. "When I was about 10, I formed a great affection for Tommy Handley, who was very big on the radio at the time – I'm that old, you see," he smiles. "Radio comedy was very new then, and it seemed to me to be something that it would be a very nice thing to do when I grew up.

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Characterisations

Nail Toibin (continued)

Niall joined the company of Dublin's Abbey Theatre in 1967, and has performed on stage in venues including New York's Princess Theatre and the National in London.

His impressive list of TV credits range from regular roles in *The Irish RM* and *Stay Lucky* to guest appearances in everything from *Boon* to *Casualty*. He has, quite simply, one of the best-known faces in Ireland. "I suppose that is true, unfortunately," he smiles. "But most of the time people are very nice, and I am so used to being recognised now that I would worry if it did not happen."

Despite all his experience, he admits to having been "completely floored" by *Ballykissangel's* massive success. "I thought it would maybe get a nice, comfortable audience of seven or eight million and I could not believe it when the ratings hit 15 million after three episodes. And I do not think it will be any less popular this time, if the coachloads visiting Avoca are anything to go by."

Niall, who confesses that Father Mac is a composite of three or four different priests he has encountered over the years, is also pleased that Irish viewers seem to have taken *Ballykissangel* to their hearts. "I think one of the things they like about it is that it is very representative of the general mood in Ireland today towards religion," he claims.

"The attitudes of Assumpta are much more the norm these days than the old-fashioned ones of Father Mac. He really is one of the old guard. He has the respect of his parishioners, but he would not have their sympathy for his views."

So is it about time that the irascible, wily old schemer was put out to pasture?

"Well now, I think I am right in saying only his bishop can make a priest retire if he does not want to," ventures Niall.

"Father Mac's has not yet put in an appearance so far, but you never know, he may descend on Ballykissangel one day and say, 'Come on, out you go!'"

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Characterisations

Gary Whelan (Brendan Kearney)

"Brendan is the man who a lot of men would like to be," says Gary. "He's a bachelor who gets a good salary, goes fishing and racing, spends a lot of time in the pub, and womanises when he gets the chance. No one nags him or gets at him and he is in on all the intrigues that go on in the village." Gary Whelan reckons his character in *Ballykissangel* leads an idyllic existence – and admits he has a pretty good time playing him too. "It is an easy job because Brendan does not really have to do anything but be himself," he smiles. "Whatever he is feeling shows in his behaviour, and I really enjoy that as an actor."

A familiar face, thanks to his many TV and film roles, Gary has worked hard to flesh out the laid-back teacher. "*Ballykissangel* is very well written but Brendan's character had not really been developed in the earlier episodes – basically, he was there to prop up the bar in Fitzgerald's. But Kieran Prendiville has worked on him for this series, having seen what I did with him in the first. He liked the idea of Brendan being very much his own man, but fitting in with all groups."

Gary claims there is an "awful lot" of himself in Brendan, but the two men could not be more different in many ways. Whereas his on-screen persona tends towards idleness when he is not working, the Dublin-born actor has never been one for letting the grass grow under his feet.

He trained at RADA, but first made his fortune in the property business. He initially struck it rich in London then in Dublin where, amongst other things, he opened Whelan's pub, which became one of the Irish capital's most popular watering holes. "Acting is my full-time job, but man has to do things with his money," Gary grins. "Those other things have been done out of boredom, and they have all been very exciting and worthwhile, but these days all I really do is act."

The father of five, who grew up in the same street as his wife, has certainly been busy of late. Between series one and two of *Ballykissangel*, he has had roles in two feature films, including Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins* and ITV's *Moll Flanders*. It is a far cry from his previous roles, which tended to be plain-clothes policemen in dramas such as *The Bill*, *Brookside* and *EastEnders*. "I have never played a cop on stage or in films – and I have done 20 movies – but it is TV that gets the biggest audiences and I did do a number of police roles in a fairly short period. The thing is so much TV drama revolves around crime that every few actors avoid playing coppers, especially when they are six feet three."

All in all, he would rather be in Fitzgerald's than down the police station. "All the drink in the 'pub' is real, so we have free pints every day," he smiles. "Well, it is very difficult to produce an authentic-looking fake pint of Guinness, and they keep us topped up!"

Drama Series

8 x 50 minutes

Ballykissangel

Series 2

Characterisations

Deirdre Donnelly (Siobhan Mehigan)

Ballykissangel meets *All Creatures Great and Small* in the character of Siobhan, the local vet.

"We see her at work quite a lot in the second series," says Deirdre. "We were out filming scenes where Siobhan has to do blood tests on pigs owned by Eamonn, an eccentric farmer who treats his animals like they are family and plays music to them.

"In another episode, she has to deliver a calf. We found a lovely cow that was about to give birth, but luckily I did not have to do the 'business'," she laughs, referring to the ultra-realistic methods employed by Christopher Timothy and Robert Hardy in *All Creatures*.

"I really enjoy those sort of scenes because it is lovely to get out of the studio. It can be a bit claustrophobic in there, though I suppose a lot of people would not mind being stuck in a 'pub' for days on end!"

Siobhan is, of course, one of the regulars in Fitzgerald's. "She likes hanging about with the lads and having a jar, but I think she has a very soft heart underneath all that," says Deirdre.

"I suspect she gets on better with her animals than she does with people in some ways, and she tends to be a bit of a loner sometimes. She enjoys pub life and that aspect of socialising but, as far as her private life goes, she likes being on her own.

"She is single, and there has been no mention of a husband in the past or anything like that. I think she is just happy as she is; she enjoys her life as a single woman and is very independent. Maybe the animals are her substitute children."

Deirdre lives by the sea near Dublin with her teenage daughter, Lucy, who appears as an extra in one scene in this series.

"She was very interested in the work we do on *Ballykissangel*, but did not realise how long and drawn-out it tends to be, so her interest has waned a bit."

Drama Series

8 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 2

Characterisations

Peter Caffrey (Padraig O'Kelly)

When Peter Caffrey returned to his native Ireland in 1994, he expected to stay for a month. "I came back to do a four-week run on stage and I'm still here," he smiles. "One job led to another because there is such a rash of stuff being made here at the moment. I have had so much work in Ireland that I have barely spent any time at my house in London. Not that I am complaining. I am knackered, but I am not complaining!"

One of Peter's jobs was, of course, playing garage owner and Fitzgerald's bar regular Padraig in *Ballykissangel*. "It is not a huge role but it is a nice, steady part. It would be nice to see it develop a wee bit more in the next series. The life of the village is so important to the show, and I think people would like to know more about all the regular characters."

Viewers are introduced to Padraig's young son, Kevin, in Series 2. "He was mentioned in the first, but we never saw him," says Peter. "There are all sorts of possibilities. Do I have any more kids, and where is my wife? Have I done a *Brookside* and buried her in the back garden?" he laughs. "Everyone has the potential to develop in *Ballykissangel*."

In 1983, Dublin-born Peter decided to develop his career by starring in a production of *Children of a Lesser God* in London's West End. "I wanted to spread my wings a bit, so when the chance came up to work in London, I jumped at it." Since making the move, he has become a familiar face on British TV. "You name it, I have done an episode of it. I enjoy living in England and I have met some smashing people, but the last couple of years in Ireland have been great. There's so much more going on now compared to when I left. You can't turn a corner without bumping into a film crew or a 19-year-old with a brilliant script under his arm. The whole place is really jumping."

Divorcee Peter feels lucky to be part of it all. In 1992, he was diagnosed as having cancer of the floor of the mouth. "Fortunately, a new form of radiotherapy was being developed at the time, so I gave it a go," he recalls. "The treatment was very intensive and it knocked the socks off me. I wasn't sure whether I would ever fully regain my speech, and it was nine months before I could really function again."

"I will not deny I was scared out of my wits but I always had a positive mental attitude, which is vital. You are halfway to winning the battle if you say, 'I'm going to beat this!' All the staff at the Royal Marsden Hospital in London, where I was treated, said it is the kickers, biters and fighters who tend to pull through, and here I am, having a great time, drinking pints and chasing young women!"

Peter has written a film script based on his experience. "It is not earnest or worthy," he stresses. "It is about how a fellow copes when he has landed in the mire. Will I play the lead? Nobody else is going to; I've written the best part for myself."

Drama Series

8 x 50 minutes

Ballykissangel

Series 2

Episode Synopses

1. For One Night Only

The Ballykissangel locals are in the midst of the annual Charity Slave Auction, where folk bid for the right to three hours of someone's time – all in a good cause. Father Clifford finds himself working behind the bar when Assumpta Fitzgerald bids for him. Brian Quigley is less lucky, as he ends up rodding sewers for one of his own employees.

Niamh Egan, newly married to the Garda (policeman), Ambrose, is keen to buy Assumpta a present: ex rock star Enda O'Sullivan, who has moved into the village. Assumpta is not impressed, but puts up with his singing, "One-hit wonders back in the 80s." She has also been sold at auction – to Father Mac. But what devious plan does he have in mind?

Garage-owner, Padraig O'Kelly, persuades Father Peter to direct a play – *Ryan's Mother: the Prequel* – despite the dire warnings of schoolteacher Brendan Kearney. "If it was a fight, you'd stop it. If it was a lame horse, you'd put it out of its misery," Brendan protests.

Despite persuading Quigley to sponsor the production and both Assumpta and Enda to take the leads, Padraig and Peter's plans fall apart when Enda twists his ankle and Father Peter has to take the role. Not only that, Brendan suddenly claims the play is his after all.

Drama Series

8 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 2

Episode Synopses

2. River Dance

Ballykissangel School has to lose a teacher and it turns out to be Brendan, who is devastated. The village is up in arms, particularly Father Peter, when he discovers who was behind the decision.

Niamh and Ambrose are trying for a baby. So determined is Niamh that Ambrose is called upon to "do his duty" at any time of the day.

Father Peter is also concerned for one of his parishioners, Mairie Kilfeather (**Pauline Cadell**) who has problems with her husband, Jimmy (**Brendan Conroy**). Doctor Ryan and the Garda, Ambrose, are away of what is going on, but are powerless to act.

Liam and Donal, after seeing musician Enda O'Sullivan panning for gold in the river, decide to capitalise on the age-old rumours of gold being found in Bally K and set up a money-spinning tourist attraction – much to the amusement of Brian Quigley.

Drama Series

8 x 50 minutes

Ballykissangel

Series 2

Episode Synopses

3. In the Can

Brian Quigley decides to make a tourist film advertising Ballykissangel, with Liam and Donal as his crew. With varying degrees of success, they try to capture different aspects of village life.

Niamh is taking her pregnancy very seriously and has developed food cravings, insisting poor Ambrose eat whatever she does.

Father Peter decides to hold a Sunday Mass aimed at young people and enrolls the help of musician, Enda O'Sullivan, to play at the Mass.

Assumpta agrees to have dinner with Enda, much to the annoyance of his lover, Aileen (**Siobhan Miley**), who promptly refuses to babysit Enda's son, Feargal (**Simon Mulholland**). Feargal spends the evening at Padraig's house, only to run home and await his father's return.

Assumpta does not know what to believe after receiving conflicting pieces of information on Enda's relationship with Aileen. Will love blossom or will a chance sighting by Niamh make her mind up, once and for all?

Drama Series

8 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 2

Episode Synopses

4.The Facts of Life

A newborn baby left on Father Peter's doorstep sets him on a trail to find the baby's mother. He also gives a talk to the local youth club, which the pub regulars soon dub his "sex talk".

Garda Ambrose, after slipping on a piece of soap, takes to his bed. He is clearly out of action for some time, so Sergeant Foley (**Alan Barry**) announces a temporary replacement, Gard McMullen (**Sean Kearns**), a humourless, fussy individual. Brian Quigley, initially very keen to take advantage of the situation, soon changes his mind and joins forces with Ambrose to plot McMullen's downfall.

Niamh, in the early stages of her pregnancy, tragically loses her baby.

Drama Series

8 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 2

Episode Synopses

5. Someone to Watch over Me

Quigley appoints a rather attractive and flirtatious middle-aged woman, Nora (**Catherine Byrne**), as his housekeeper. But it soon becomes clear that he has taken on rather more than he had bargained for.

Brendan acquires ten new pupils at his school when another school closes down. They are an unruly bunch, and Niamh is forced to take control when she rescues shopkeeper Kathleen from the grips of 'Genghis' Con O'Neill (**Niall O'Shea**) and his gang. Brendan, clearly impressed, persuades Niamh to help out at the Ballykissangel school.

Father Peter and Assumpta have a late-night drink, discussing everyone else's problems. But when the subject turns to themselves...

Drama Series

8 x 50 minutes

Ballykissangel

Series 2

Episode Synopses

6. Only Skin Deep

Siobhan combines her veterinary skills with some detection work when Quigley announces plans for a beauty contest and a stunningly beautiful young woman called Naomi (**Barbara Griffin**) arrives in the village, claiming to be "Eamonn's niece from Dublin".

It soon transpires that Quigley stands to gain much more than just taking the credit for the contest. In her search for the truth, Siobhan becomes embroiled with Brendan.

Meanwhile, Niamh is being run ragged by 'Genghis' Con O'Neill (**Niall O'Shea**). Father Peter tries to get through to him and, on discovering that he has no family, becomes determined to help him. Ambrose, however, does rather better than Peter.

Drama Series

8 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 2

Episode Synopses

7. Money, Money, Money

A fire at shopkeeper Kathleen's house leads to her being packed off to her sister. As Kathleen had no insurance, the villagers decide to restore the house for when she returns, and start a collection.

Quigley bumps into an old acquaintance, Mossy Phelan (**Garrett Keogh**), who lets him in on a greyhound betting scam. Quigley, true to form, cannot resist.

Once the work on Kathleen's home is underway, it becomes evident that the collection has not raised enough money and what better way to get more money than a gamble on the dogs? But when the 'sure bet' backfires, a poker tournament at Fitzgerald's – with Father Peter as referee – seems the only option left.

Drama Series

8 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 2

Episode Synopses

8. Chinese Whispers

Two strangers, Tom (**Peter Sheridan**) and Jerry (**Daragh Kelly**) arrive in town, behaving very suspiciously. They are spotted watching Quigley buying materials from the shop of his old enemy, Dooley (**Owen Roe**).

Meanwhile, Quigley is burgled, losing, amongst other things, his account books. He refuses to tell the police, as the books are decidedly dodgy and he does not want his shady deals exposed. Rumours that Tom and Jerry are from 'the Revenue' send shockwaves through the village.

Assumpta tells Niamh that she is fed up with life in Ballykissangel and that she is considering a move to Dublin. Word soon spreads that she is leaving, and when Father Peter asks if it is true, he is hurt that she did not talk to him about it.

Niamh suspects that she is pregnant again and eventually goes to the doctor.

Drama Series

8 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 2

Ratings

Episode	UK Tx Date	Channel	Time On	Audience	Share %
1	05.1.97	BBC1	2000	13.5 million	44.7%
2	12.1.97	BBC1	2000	12.0 million	40.0%
3	19.1.97	BBC1	2000	12.8 million	43.2%
4	26.1.97	BBC1	2000	13.0 million	43.5%
5	02.2.97	BBC1	2000	12.7 million	43.3%
6	09.2.97	BBC1	2000	10.0 million	30.6%
7	16.2.97	BBC1	2000	10.3 million	32.6%
8	23.2.97	BBC1	2000	10.9 million	34.5%

Drama Series

8 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 2

Awards

Series 1

National Television Awards 1996
Most Popular Actress
Dervla Kirwan

Series 2

Royal Television Society Awards 1997
Best Drama Series

Series 3

Promax UK Awards 1998
Gold Prize
Best Drama Production

BAFTA 1998
Nomination:Most Popular Drama Series
Nomination:Most Popular Actress – Dervla Kirwan

Series 4

TRIC Awards 1999
TVTheme Music of the Year

Drama Series

8 x 50 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Ballykissangel

Series 2

What the Papers Say

"...a fabulous fusion of fantasy and tradition, laced with gentle humour and hints of romance. Who could resist?"
Daily Telegraph

"It has the feel good factor stamped all over it – from the delightful country scenery to the friendly locals... Even the sun seems to shine all the time... it goes down as smoothly as a pint of Guinness at Fitzgerald's bar." *Daily Mirror*

"Resident cast and easygoing humour triumphantly intact... continues to delight." *The Times*

"Enjoyable in an escapist sort of way." *Guardian*

"Writer Kieran Prendiville is a dab hand with the situation side of a sitcom." *Daily Mail*

Drama Series

8 x 50 minutes