

BBC Worldwide

Ballykissangel

Series 4

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British Broadcasting Corporation BBC Worldwide Woodlands 80 Wood Lane London W12 0TT

Tel +44 20 8433 2000 Fax +44 20 8740 1182 Email international.distribution.worldwide@bbc.co.uk Online catalogue www.bbcworldwidetv.com

BBC Worldwide

Ballykissangel

Series 4

New faces and new families join old favourites for the fourth in this popular series about the dramas and absurdities of life in a picturesque Irish town

Drama

11 x 50 minutes

Ballykissangel

Series 4

General Synopsis

Since the first screening of *Ballykissangel* in 1996, the small Irish town of Avoca (about an hour's drive south east of Dublin) has been besieged by visitors eager to see the places they have come to know and love on television. Avoca is the real location of *Ballykissangel* and every year millions of fans come here from all over the world.

For 26 episodes, the spark of forbidden love and whimsical goings-on of this rural Irish community kept Bally K fans glued to their seats. The last series saw the death of the beautiful barmaid Assumpta (**Dervla Kirwan**) and the departure of a heartbroken Father Peter Clifford (**Stephen Tompkinson**). But life goes on and there are new faces in town...

Brian Quigley has his eye on Fitzgerald's bar, which is being sold at auction following the tragic death of Assumpta. But his plans could be thwarted by the appearance of wealthy Mrs Bella Mooney, who has aspirations of her own – and by the reluctance of his daughter, Niamh, to run the place with him.

"Most people round here would prefer you and me running Assumpta's pub," Quigley tells Niamh, "rather than some Johnnie-come-lately with a pony tail and 15 different words for a cup of coffee." Niamh's husband, gard Ambrose Egan, is also concerned, "Bars and babies don't mix," he mutters darkly.

Quigley is shaken by the reappearance after more than 20 years of an old family adversary, Sean Dillon, at the deserted farmhouse once owned by Dillon's father, whose ruthlessness in business dealings was legendary. Sean left Ballykissangel when he was a teenager, but did not expect the feuding to continue; however, memories live long in Bally K.

The villagers eagerly anticipate the arrival of their new priest, Father Aidan O'Connell, but it is his sister, the wild and beautiful Orla – fresh from backpacking round the Far East and Tasmania – who attracts more interest, particularly as the priest seems to have gone walkabout after 10 years in a monastery. Father MacAnally is keen to see him safely installed, but nervous about how he will settle in.

Another new face is Emma Dillon, Sean's 16-year-old daughter, who follows him to Ireland and discovers that Ballykissangel could also be the place for her – particularly when she meets young Danny Byrne, a handsome, horse-mad 18-year-old.

Fitzgerald's bar will soon be reopening for the new punters plus regulars Liam and Donal, schoolteacher Brendan, garage-owner Padraig, farmer Eamon, vet Siobhan, Dr Ryan and shopkeeper Kathleen.

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Regular Cast List

Brian Quigley	Tony Doyle
Father Macanally	Niall Toibin
Ambrose Egan	Peter Hanly
Niamh Egan	Tina Kellegher
Liam	Joe Savino
Donal	Frankie McCafferty
Siobhan Mehigan	Deirdre Donnelly
Brendan Kearney	Gary Whelan
Eamon Byrne	Birdy Sweeney
Padraig O'Kelly	Peter Caffrey
Doctor Michael Ryan	Bosco Hogan
Kathleen	Aine Ní Mhuirí
Kevin O'Kelly	John Cleere

New Cast Regulars

Sean Dillon	Lorcan Cranitch
Orla O'Connell	Victoria Smurfit
Father Aidan O'Connell	Don Wycherley
Danny Byrne	Col Farrell
Emma Dillon	Kate McEnery

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Production Credits

Series Created By **Kieran Prendiville** (*Badger, Roughnecks, Vicious Circle, Boon*)

Writers **Robert Jones**
Ted Gannon
Jimmy Murphy
Mark Holloway
Barry Devlin
Stephen Plaice

Directors **Simon Meyers** (*Always and Everyone*)
Simon Massey (*True Love*)
Mike Cocker
Peter Lydon (*Hope and Glory*)
Nigel Bristow (*Byker Grove, The Bill*)

Producer **Chris Clough** (*The Bill: Target, Doctor Who*)

Executive Producers **Sophie Balhetchet** (World Productions)
Jeremy Gwilt (BBC)

A Ballykea Production for World Productions for BBC Northern Ireland

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Characterisations

Victoria Smurfit (Orla O'Connell, Father Aidan's sister)

In the early months of 1997, the residents of Camden in north London provided the unwitting audience for a series of command performances from Victoria Smurfit. Some days the copper-haired Irish actress would wander around her local shops and supermarkets in a thick Californian drawl. On other days she would slip into the broadest of Irish brogues. Every actor has to learn to deal with spells of unemployment. Smurfit learned to cope with her first taste of joblessness by inventing her own cast of characters.

"I didn't work for five months and it was torture," she explains. "I started becoming these characters in shops because I thought if I stay myself any longer than this I am going to lose my mind."

Such impromptu performances are almost certainly a thing of the past. Victoria's success in hits like *Ivanhoe* and *Berkeley Square* have made her one of television's rising stars. *Ballykissangel* completes her climb to the top of the television pile.

The daughter of one of Ireland's most prominent and wealthy families, Victoria's destiny was obvious from an early age. "My mother says that she and my grandmother used to call me Sarah Bernhardt from the time when I was very little," she smiles. It was only when she reached her late teens that she decided to pursue acting, however.

"I'd always said I want to be a fire engine driver, like every kid. I was 16 or 17 when I said I wanted to be an actress. My parents said, quite rightly, fine, but you have to prove yourself. My dad and I struck a deal. He said I had a year to get into drama school. If I didn't get in, I would go to university and do a languages degree. I said, fine, you're on," she explains.

Within weeks she had auditioned for the prestigious Bristol Old Vic drama school. "When the acceptance letter landed on the mat I took it into the bathroom on my own and came down screaming. Now they're so proud," she smiles.

Yet her famous surname has been a handicap, particularly in Ireland where she is constantly confronted by the prejudices and preconceptions of her countrymen.

"I was once told by a casting director that I would never work here in Ireland unless I changed my name. I thought, well, I'll never work here then," she says defiantly. "I just thought I'm proud of who I am and where I come from, that's my surname. People think it opens doors for you but only in that people think 'oh, let's see what the Smurfit girl can do'."

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Characterisations

Victoria Smurfit (continued)

She leapt at the chance of joining the cast of one of the most successful television series ever filmed in her native land. Her greatest problem was separating fact from fiction.

"It's very funny when you first come on set. You have to tell yourself, no that's not Quigley, it's Tony. I'm sort of an awestruck Joe Public," she laughs.

Her character, Orla, offers a reminder of the independent spirit of the departed Assumpta Fitzgerald. "She is free thinking, will give anything a go, she has a broad-minded mentality," Victoria says of her character. "She's travelled everywhere, tried everything once, then she arrives in this small village. She wants to fit in but she doesn't quite. That's the appeal to her. She lives by her own set of rules. She's naturally effervescent."

"I come in, do my job as well as I can, then go home. I want it to do really well but what happens afterward is not my problem. If 12 million people tune in - fabulous."

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Characterisations

Lorcan Cranitch (businessman Sean Dillon)

Much like his mysterious, new *alter ego*, Sean Dillon, Lorcan Cranitch's arrival in Ballykissangel marks a return to his roots. Unlike his troubled character, however, the Dublin-born actor could not be happier to have arrived home.

Cranitch left Ireland for London and RADA 18 years ago. Since then his career has prevented him from spending any length of time in the city in which his friends and family remain.

"I don't think it's by accident that actors are legally classed in the same group as vagabonds. I've always gone to where the next job is," explains the actor whose career has brought periods working in Australia, Russia and Europe.

"You can't always orchestrate the ideal situation, but this was very close to it. For all sorts of reasons it's great to do something at home. I'm born and bred in Dublin and I haven't worked here for a long time. I miss my family and the people in general; it's great to be here," he adds during a break from filming at Bray Studios, a few miles south of his home city.

On the face of it, Sean Dillon is the latest in a line of angst-ridden characters for which Cranitch has carved out something of a reputation. He arrives back in his boyhood home of Ballykissangel after a 20-year exile, having reached an emotional crisis point. "His wife has died and he is at a crossroads in his life," explains Cranitch.

In comparison to his most notable television creation, the psychotic detective Jimmy Beck in *Cracker* (the original English *Fitz*), however, Cranitch reckons Sean Dillon is a piece of light relief.

"Because of his family's history in the village, it is not easy for him and a lot of people don't make it easy for him. He has to smooth that over and keep people happy. So in that sense I am exploring an avenue that I'm not known for.

"Part of *Ballykissangel's* appeal is its lightness of touch and its comedy. It's certainly as far away from *Cracker* as you are ever going to get!" he explains.

Lorcan is one of two children born to a civil servant father attached to the Post Office in Dublin. His sister Ellen is a highly regarded flautist and composer.

He admits he secretly yearns he had some of her musical talent. "I am a frustrated keyboard player," he says. "I have a piano in the house. But I can't play and I just wish I could."

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Characterisations

Lorcan Cranitch (continued)

When he told his father he intended being an actor, he was convinced he was 'bonkers'. "I understand why. It's the most precarious business in the world and your son's going to go off and do it. He was quite right," he smiles.

There have been times when he has wondered whether he should have listened to his father's advice. In January 1993, he admits, his disillusionment with acting ran so deep he was seriously considering leaving the profession.

His interview for the part of Beck in *Cracker* changed all that, however.

"To be honest, during the time coming up to that interview I hadn't been working for a while and I was fed up with the whole business. Whether it was theatre or film or television, it just wasn't coming my way. I was getting offers to do two-week school workshops in Derby, really helpful stuff," he says. "I was at the point of saying there's got to be more to life than this. I thought there had to be a ying to this ying."

Instead, his compelling performance as Beck heralded the beginning of his career as a major television star. "This is the most extraordinary profession. You just don't know what's going to be happening to you from one day to the next. When *Cracker* came along I had a part as a cop in a new tv series, that's all I knew. Who was to know what would happen when I went in for a 20-minute interview," he smiles.

Since *Cracker*, Cranitch's performance in the BBC adaptation of Deborah Moggach's steamy novel, *Close Relations*, brought him attention of an entirely different kind. "Suddenly I was Lorcan Cranitch, sex symbol – the newspapers' words, not mine, I hasten to add. I just laughed," he says, a pained expression forming on his face at the memory.

Ballykissangel allows him to be seen in a different light again. "As far as is possible in this business, I want to keep shifting the goalposts around," he says. He admits the day when he ends his vagabond existence may be drawing closer, however.

Cranitch's main home remains in London. But like his alter ego, who devotes his energies to rebuilding the family farm in *Ballykissangel*, he has bought himself a dilapidated farmhouse that he is renovating. "It's a smallholding in County Wicklow," he explains. "I am going to do it up myself, if I can. The stuff I can tackle, I will tackle. I have wielded a paintbrush before."

He does not rule out moving back to Ireland for good at some point. "I would like to get roots down at some stage," he says, with a shrug of resignation. "I keep telling myself, I'm not the 23 year-old that I think I am!"

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Characterisations

Don Wycherley (Father Aidan O'Connell)

Don Wycherley's first day on the set of *Ballykissangel* was something of a family reunion. Since breaking into the Irish theatrical scene some eight years or so ago, the 30-year-old has appeared on stage with, amongst others, co-stars Lorcan Cranitch and Niall Toibin.

Even closer to home, Tina Kellegher has become his sister-in-law since marrying his younger brother Gordon, *Ballykissangel's* location manager.

"It wasn't difficult for me coming in, I suppose I am a part of the acting fraternity over here," confesses the Cork-born actor who plays the series' new priest, Father Aidan.

Yet for all the familiarity of the company, Wycherley admits he had to draw on the calming powers of a set of rosary beads he carried with him during each of his early scenes. He reveals the beads were blessed by the monk who provided the inspiration for his performance as the new occupant of the village pulpit.

Don's casting as successor to Stephen Tompkinson in the series, was a long, painful process. He had to endure no less than five interviews or auditions before he was cast in the role.

"I think my brother knew before me. I always guessed I would be the last to know," he smiles. Joy quickly turned into terror, however. "I was delighted, but I also felt apprehensive following in Stephen's footsteps. I knew it would be a tough act to follow."

It was then that Don prepared for the role by spending time at a Benedictine monastery in Rosscree, County Tipperary. Father Aidan arrives in Ballykissangel after a 10-year term living in a monastery. In an attempt to bring authenticity to the role, Don left his home in Dublin to spend a week with real life monks.

His greatest inspiration was one of the monastery's senior figures, 75-year-old Father Gabriel. "He had never heard of *Ballykissangel*, naturally enough, given they don't have a television set inside the monastery," he explains. "It was a very calming place, a great place to go and de-stress yourself. Having got the job I was very apprehensive. Father Gabriel was so calm and so tranquil, he was a great help to me."

At the end of his stay at the monastery, Don asked the monk for a blessing. "I took some rosary beads and I got him to bless them. I told him it was a new venture for me and I could make an absolute balls of it. He told me I'd be fine," he explains.

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Characterisations

Don Wycherley (continued)

Don admits much of his performance as Father Aidan is inspired by his experience at Rosscrea. "A lot of what I based the character on is from what I saw there. Father Aidan doesn't get into a fluster about much. He's very methodical, very religious and he believes totally in what he is doing," he says.

Don, one of three brothers, was born and raised in Skibereen near Cork in the south west corner of Ireland. He spent time teaching in Finglis, northern Dublin before making the break into acting.

"I guess I always knew I was an actor. I did two years teaching five year-olds. I did some drama and knew that I wanted to do something on those lines," he explains.

"I did a weekend course but couldn't handle working all week as well. So then I got a full-time course. At the start of September 1990, I went to see the principal and said "I'm off". He was very supportive; he said, go for it, if I didn't try it then I never would. I was 23 or so then."

There have been times when he has wondered whether he should return to the classroom. "I've always been able to work but it was mainly in the theatre, certainly for the first four years. I was finding it hard to break into the film side of things. I needed to break down the doors," he says.

Until *Ballykissangel* came along, his most notable screen role to date had been opposite Tom Berenger in a western drama filmed in Mexico in 1997.

"I still have to pinch myself I've got this role," he says honestly. The most difficult moment in his first episodes came when he had to play a scene alongside the grizzly bear adopted by Quigley's sidekick, Donal.

Don was the only member of the cast to film a scene unprotected by the steel bars insisted on by the bear's handlers. "That was a bit scary. There were two handlers with cages set up and everything," he says. He placated the bear with nothing more sophisticated than a bag of crisps.

"All he was interested in was the bag of crisps. I took a crisp out of the bag and put it in my hand. After that he was totally focused on my hand. I started talking to him. It was my first miracle in *Ballykissangel*," he says with a wink."

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Characterisations

Tony Doyle (businessman Brian Quigley)

Tony Doyle admits he had begun to wonder whether he might be remembered forever as *Ballykissangel's* roguish Brian Quigley. "It's always good to be associated with success, but long-running television series usually get one typecast," he explains. "That is not something I have wanted to happen because it can work against you."

Since the end of the last series of *Ballykissangel*, however, Doyle has done much to ensure his options remain open. In particular, his performance in the critically acclaimed BBC adaptation of the John McGahern novel *Amongst Women* has confirmed his status as one of the subtlest and most sensitive actors on screen today.

"It's quite rare in the history of television that people get a chance to do things that they want to do. I really wanted to do that; it was a wonderful piece of work," he explains. "The response has been phenomenal. Having made the breakthrough, it hopefully will mean that I won't be pigeonholed now."

After 30 years in the business, Doyle is philosophical about the purple patch he seems to be passing through. "One suffers long gaps between the telephone ringing early in one's career. The more often it rings, the happier it sounds," smiles Doyle, who viewers will also recognise from the series *Between The Lines* and *Band of Gold*.

If there is a personal price to be paid, it is his prolonged absences from his family and his three young children, in particular. "It is very difficult travelling back and forth, only seeing them most weekends," he says. When he is not working Doyle is happy to devote himself to his brood, with whom he shares a house in London. He admits he has no ambition to generate his own projects. "I don't have a production company other than the one that sits in the kitchen eating corn flakes," he laughs. "I have always believed it is manners to wait until you are asked."

The new series discovers Quigley engaged in his newest enterprises – setting Niamh up in the pub and developing a golf course on the edge of the village. Despite the arrival of a host of new characters to the show, he admits his character remains much the same. "Has he changed? Not a lot. It was hoped that he was going to turn over a new leaf and become an honest man. It doesn't seem to have happened," he smiles.

He is happy to keep it this way. While other members of the cast have suggested ideas for storylines, Doyle leaves Quigley's fate to those who are paid for such creativity. "Writers write and actors act, and that is the way it should be," he says.

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Characterisations

Tony Doyle (continued)

No one is more grateful for the profile *Ballykissangel* has provided. Yet Doyle is sure the time will eventually come to move on from the village. "I would not want it to go on forever," he says. "Far better to say goodbye while flying high as they say. If they go on for too long the standard and the quality is bound to suffer."

Like many of his fellow cast members, Doyle is constantly surprised by the recognition he receives. "I was in a hotel in Belfast recently and I was suddenly buttonholed by someone from New Jersey who was a fan of the show. I have no problem with all that, it is very nice in fact," he says. The programme's growing popularity in America means Doyle could cast his eyes across the Atlantic for work.

He admits the time when he might have been tempted to work there has probably gone. "If you'd asked me 30 years ago I might have said yes," he says. Never say never is clearly his motto, however. "If something came up one would have to remember that one is an itinerant labourer and one has to get on one's bike."

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Characterisations

Kate McEnergy (Sean Dillon's daughter, Emma)

The phone call asking Kate McEnergy whether she would accept an audition for *Ballykissangel* could not have been better timed. At the time the 16-year-old was debating whether to return to her sixth form studies at Tiffin Girls' School in Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey.

"I didn't really want to go back to college; I couldn't do the course I wanted to do and for various reasons it wasn't right, so I was ready for something else," she explains. "The weekend after the audition I got a phone call and I was out here a couple of days after that. It just all came out of the blue."

As the daughter of actors Peter McEnergy and Julie Peasgood, Kate always suspected her future might lie in the profession. "Having parents who are actors didn't make me think I've really got to do this as well, it just happened that I really liked it as well," admits Kate, who began her performing career as a young girl in television advertisements for McDonald's and Bird's Eye.

Since then she has made brief appearances in such diverse hits as *A Touch of Frost*, *Drop The Dead Donkey* and *French & Saunders*, in which she played a young Joan Collins. She has also had roles in two movies, *Bellman and True* and *Get Real*, from the writers of *This Life*.

There are, she admits, distinct bonuses in having a family background in the business. "The main advantage has been the advice, having someone who knows to go through it with you. It's great to have someone who can coach me and who knows what you can and can't do. My dad has helped me with Shakespeare speeches. And my mum helped me a lot before my audition for *Ballykissangel*," she explains. Ultimately, however, Kate knows success is something she must earn for herself. "It gets your foot in the door but the rest is up to you," she says.

Kate's character, Emma Dillon, becomes romantically linked with the series' new heart-throb Danny, played by Col Farrell. "He is this Heathcliffe figure lurking around. Eventually he and I get together," she grins. Fortunately she is already a veteran of on-screen romance. "In *Get Real* I had to snog someone," she explains. "I was a bit wary but in the end it was not a bit embarrassing. It's part of the job, something I will have to get used to."

Kate admits she has few regrets about deserting her studies and her schoolfriends. "Leaving London and coming out here has been great. It has been a brilliant first-hand experience about how to be an actress. To have a character that is ongoing is such a wonderful opportunity," she explains.

She admits that long weeks spent on set and then alone in her Dublin hotel have been far from a wrench. "It's been great. I can eat pizzas and slob about without anyone coming to tell me to tidy up my room," she laughs.

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Characterisations

Niall Toibin (Father MacAnally)

If Niall Toibin had harboured doubts about *Ballykissangel's* global popularity, they were dispelled in one memorable moment in New York. Toibin, along with 700 or so others, had been invited to a St Patrick's Day reception at the city Mayor's Office. A gentle smile works its way across his features as he recalls the reaction his presence provoked.

"A group of people from Boston arrived at this reception," he says. "Straightaway one of them spotted me, smiled and shouted, 'hey it's the *Ballykissangel* man'.

"None of the New York people knew what he was talking about because it wasn't being shown there, whereas it was being shown in Boston. The whole party then came over to me to talk about the show. It was very pleasing to see how popular it is in America," he adds.

Ballykissangel's conquest of America is a gradual affair, he explains. Toibin has two daughters living in America, one in Greenwich Village in New York, the other in San Matteo, near San Francisco.

"They can't get it in Greenwich Village so my daughter has to go to a friend across the river in New Jersey. My daughter in San Francisco has also got to travel about 10 miles to see it. But I think it is coming to all of them in due course," he explains.

Toibin attributes the series' growing worldwide success to its authenticity. "It deals with real Irish life in a pretty realistic way," he says. "I don't think it is too far from the truth as it exists here at the moment.

"Generally it is a pretty accurate picture of how things are. The attitudes reflected are pretty much the attitudes of people in Ireland, particularly towards religion. Also there's a lack of violence there is a lack of eroticism and sleaziness. There is a bit of zing. Without being sexually explicit it is interesting," he adds.

"That is continuing in this series. It is maintaining its very high standards of social and communal integrity. The village and the people are still very believable."

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Characterisations

Niall Toibin (continued)

In the new series Toibin's character, Father MacAnally, must come to terms with the new arrivals in the parish, in particular Father Aidan O'Connell, the new priest.

"Father Mac is a good manipulator, a good politician; he uses everybody. He does it from old-fashioned motives of what is good for the community," he says of his character.

"But Father Aidan is a wonderful surprise packet in that he's the last thing you'd expect after Father Peter. He's a very interesting character in that having spent 10 years in a monastery he's liable to do anything. I don't think Father Mac has made up his mind whether this man is an innocent abroad or very deep and not to be trusted," he laughs.

If Toibin has one regret about the new series it is that it denied him the opportunity to combine his professional and private passions on screen for once.

"There is a lovely storyline involving a golf course which Brian Quigley becomes involved in," explains Toibin, a fanatical lover of the game.

"You'd think they might have given Father Mac one scene in which he could have wielded a wedge or something – but no," he laughs. "What a waste of all those lessons!"

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Characterisations

Peter Hanly (policeman Ambrose Egan)

Peter Hanly spent his vacation from *Ballykissangel* playing a villainous rogue in Sheridan's *The School For Scandal*. "He was very clever, the type of guy who gets himself out of every corner he paints himself into with great style and humour," he says with a wry smile. "Very unlike Ambrose."

In reality, Peter too is far removed from *Ballykissangel's* downtrodden policeman. While Ambrose has no ambition beyond remaining in the village, Hanly confesses he has much he wants to achieve in his profession, and has been approached for other roles. However, Hanly has never shirked tough decisions.

The youngest son of a history teacher father and housewife mother, he was educated at one of Dublin's premier schools, Belvedere College. His parents had expected him to use his education as a springboard for a solid, professional career. The announcement that he intended treading the boards with the Dublin Youth Theatre met with a frosty reception. "Both my parents were reluctant to give me any kind of blessing initially. They were very much against it," he says. His elder sister had helped Hanly get a job offer in the civil service where she worked.

"It was a permanent, pensionable post. At the time I was working with a Polish director down in Kilkenny and had only come back to Dublin for the weekend. They said all the sensible things like, 'what about your future, what about a family?' But I couldn't do it," he smiles.

Since then he has proved his family wrong. Hanly's impressive CV includes an appearance in *Braveheart*. He still gets stopped in the streets of Dublin and elsewhere by people who recognise him from his role in the Oscar-winning Mel Gibson movie.

Towards the end (Episodes 11/12) of this fourth series of *Ballykissangel*, Ambrose faces problems with his marriage to the lovely Niamh (Tina Kellegher). "He realises for the first time that she has changed and perhaps he hasn't," reveals Peter. When Niamh takes over Fitzgerald's pub with her father, Brian Quigley, Ambrose agonises over whether to move "above the shop" – afraid that he may be fired by his volatile boss, Superintendent Foley, if he finds out that his Ballykissangel gard is living over the pub. Ambrose also faces a potential threat on his life in Episode 6 when a drug dealer whom he put inside is finally released and comes looking for him. "It's a tense time for Ambrose," smiles Peter.

Hanly has great affection for Ambrose, but it is his friendship with his on-screen wife, played by Tina Kellegher, which is particularly close. "I went to her wedding to our location manager, Gordon Wycherley – Don Wycherley's brother. It was a lovely occasion," he says.

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Characterisations

Birdy Sweeney (farmer Eamon Byrne)

For a man who only took up acting ten years ago at the tender age of 57, Birdy Sweeney is doing rather well for himself. His performances as eccentric farmer Eamon Byrne have made him one of the more popular members of *Ballykissangel's* supporting cast. In addition, Sweeney is being offered more work than he can cope with. "I should be thinking about retiring but my career has just taken off," smiles the actor, from Dungannon in Northern Ireland.

Sweeney has spent most of his life as a comic and bird-impersonator. He picked up his distinctive nickname as a schoolboy and made his debut mimicking blackbirds as an eleven-year-old on BBC radio in Belfast. "I was christened Edmund but it doesn't mean a thing. If someone whistled it at me I wouldn't even turn around for them," he says of his nickname.

Sweeney had remained a local celebrity in Ulster, despite suffering a heart attack at the age of 40 and fighting a lifelong battle with diabetes. "My health hasn't been that great for some time. I was diagnosed diabetic in my 30s. I still have to inject myself with insulin four times a day."

Given this, the transformation that followed when the oldest of his eight children, Terence, suggested he try for a stage role he was auditioning for himself is even more remarkable. "My only regret now is that I didn't get involved in drama sooner," smiles Birdy.

He can barely believe the recognition *Ballykissangel* has brought. "The letters are coming from all over the world. It's incredible, I had a letter from a sheep farmer in Texas. He wanted to know about sheep farming," he says.

Such is Eamon's popularity, his character has been given greater prominence in the new series. He has to deal with the arrival of an old blood enemy in Sean Dillon and then the sudden appearance of his nephew Danny from Dublin.

His elevation in the cast has meant more time spent on the train to Dublin from Dungannon where he has spent his entire life.

"I'm still in Dungannon, I will never leave there," he says. "Luckily these days you don't need to live in London or Dublin. I am only an hour away from anywhere now," he adds.

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Characterisations

Tina Kellegher (Niamh Egan, Quigley's daughter and Ambrose's wife)

Tina Kellegher could not be happier that the biggest production of her life so far attracted not a single member of the press or public. Tina had spent months trying to keep the details of her wedding to *Ballykissangel* location manager Gordon Wycherley a secret from the media. As she walked down the aisle in a secluded corner of County Kildare, the smile on her face was all the broader for knowing that she had succeeded. "We planned it so that nobody knew anything, and nobody did, it wasn't in any newspaper or magazine," she smiles. "It all worked out rather well."

Tina was introduced to Gordon five years ago by his actor brother Don, *Ballykissangel*'s new priest, Father Aidan. "We did *Comedy of Errors* at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin and he got us together," she recalls with a wistful smile. During the series' early days, she and Gordon kept their relationship to themselves. The couple feared their romance might attract the sort of lurid headlines generated when news of Dervla Kirwan and Stephen Tompkinson's relationship slipped out from the set.

"Nobody knew that I was going out with a member of the crew," she says. "But I had been going out with him for years before *Ballykissangel*. I think that was one of the reasons I was very careful about it because it was not a *Ballykissangel* romance, it was a real world romance. It had nothing to do with the series but it could easily have turned into that, particularly given what had happened with Stephen and Dervla. People were looking for that."

At one point, rather than declaring her love for Gordon, Tina let gossip columns link her with her on-screen partner. "There were times when people were convinced that Peter Hanly and I were going out with each other," she says with a slow shake of her head. "But I just kept a low profile. You can really put your soul into publicity but I don't tend to go down that road," she adds.

Tina, for one, was delighted by the news that the series was returning for a fourth time. "It suited me personally, having just got married. So it was nice to have another year of it," she says.

The demands of her role in *Ballykissangel* are offering her enough challenges for now, she admits, although other roles have been offered to Tina, who also starred in the films *In the Name of the Father* and *The Snapper* before she came to *Bally K*. With the powerful personality of Assumpta gone, Tina's character Niamh moves into the centre of village life. Her father buys her the pub, Fitzgerald's, and she evolves into a hard-headed businesswoman.

Her new life comes at a price, however, placing strains on her marriage to the village Garda, Ambrose, played by Peter Hanley. "Niamh's been growing all the time, so it's a continuation of that progression," she explains. "It's also the fact that Assumpta is gone. She can be her own person now because she was always in Assumpta's shadow."

Drama

11 x 50 minutes

Ballykissangel

Series 4

Characterisations

Frankie McCafferty (Donal, Brian Quigley's right-hand man)

Frankie McCafferty admits he had grave reservations about acting alongside his latest screen sidekick – a 20-stone grizzly bear. The bear arrives in Ballykissangel to provide McCafferty's character, dimwitted Donal, with an unlikely female companion.

McCafferty tried not to think too hard as he shared his first screen moments with the huge – and potentially lethal – beast. "He was scary all right," he says. "He should have been hibernating so he was quite docile. But at the same time his handlers said he was highly unpredictable. He could cause you serious harm in a second, I'm sure. As an actor you've got to dive in and trust the people in charge of safety, that's what I did," he smiles. "I survived."

Having appeared in all four series, Donal is developing into one of *Ballykissangel's* subtler and more surprising characters. "Donal is capable of coming out with unexpected things. He has possibilities beyond driving diggers and talking about diesel," he smiles.

Donal's hidden depths reflect McCafferty's own, off-screen personality. His reputation as a rising directorial star has been confirmed by the success of his documentary *Brood* and the green light for his second short movie, *Flush*.

He is under no illusion that it is *Ballykissangel* that has allowed him to spread his wings. He admits that he will never quite get used to the fame that comes with it, however. "It's mind boggling. In Belfast I can't really go to the pub and have any peace. It's strange, I never thought I'd ever have to do that," he says.

"Just the other day I was asked to do a celebrity event with the Lord's Taverners charity in London. I still can't quite think of myself as being a celebrity."

If anything, he is worried that Donal's growing popularity will make him an even more recognisable face.

"There's a gap to be filled since Stephen Tompkinson and Dervla Kirwan left and it's quite frightening now that we are all much more in the limelight," he admits.

At the same time he is under no illusion that he should make hay while the sun shines. "I suppose we should use it while we've got it; we could be in the gutter in two year's time," he laughs.

Drama

11 x 50 minutes

Ballykissangel

Series 4

Characterisations

Gary Whelan (schoolteacher Brendan Kearney)

Gary Whelan's status as Ballykissangel's unlikely sex symbol was confirmed by a letter he recently received from a teacher at a sixth form college for girls. "They had organised a debate on who they liked in *Ballykissangel*. I was voted "the kiss in *Ballykissangel*". At my age I'm over the moon," smiles the father of five.

In truth, such compliments are far from a new phenomenon. Ever since the series began, Whelan has received a steady flow of letters from female admirers. They offer everything from a friendly welcome to visit "if he is ever down their way", to advice on how Brendan should deal with his difficult relationship with mother-to-be Siobhan in the series.

"Between 75% and 80% of the mail I get is from women. Lots of them have been telling me, 'don't be bullied into marrying her'," explains Whelan. He can understand their affection for *Ballykissangel*'s fastidious school teacher. "Women are attracted by the fact that he's a big guy with a very soft manner. He's a gentle giant," he smiles.

In the new series, Brendan's world faces further upheaval by the imminent arrival of the child he and the village vet Siobhan are expecting. "The idea of the child coming into his life is like losing his fishing rod. Brendan can't tolerate that disruption to his routine," he explains.

The prospect of having to deal with the complexities of such a relationship in real life produces a slow shake of Whelan's head. "Brendan and her are old friends rather than lovers. It would probably never work. Marriage is hard at the best of times, even if you love someone. If you don't love someone then marriage must be a nightmare," he ruminates.

Whelan's popularity in *Ballykissangel* has generated a wealth of new job offers. Apart from an appearance in the BBC's *The Ambassador* with Pauline Collins, filmed conveniently in Dublin, he has had to turn down most of them in favour of *Ballykissangel*.

"I've had offers to do other series. A lot of other companies would like to have some of the ingredients that have made *Ballykissangel* such a success."

He, for one, is happy to continue with the series for the foreseeable future. "I would not describe this as a soap in any way, but it is like *Coronation Street* in terms of its potential longevity, it becomes part of people's lives," he says.

"The essence of the show is that it does not change. Provided they hold the cast together I think it can go on for a long time yet."

Drama

11 x 50 minutes

Ballykissangel

Series 4

Characterisations

Col Farrell (Danny Byrne, farmer Eamon Byrne's great-nephew)

Col Farrell sacrificed a potential career as a footballer to become an actor. The 19-year-old Dubliner was expected to follow in the footsteps of his father Eamon and his uncle Tommy, both of whom were well-known professionals with the city's Shamrock Rovers side. "Until I was 15 I was sure that was what I was going to do," he says, an impish grin forming on his handsome face. "But there's too much money in it these days. And besides, I'd have to do dodgy hair adverts and go out with members of the Spice Girls."

The smile soon disappears as Farrell recalls the moment when he announced he intended joining the ranks of the Gaiety Drama School in his home city rather than pursuing his sporting dreams. "My father wasn't too pleased, to say the least," he explains. "His philosophy was along the lines of what do you want to be doing play acting for?" Three years later, however, his father has conceded his mistake. Col's arrival in *Ballykissangel* seems set to transform him into an idol for millions of females.

The darkly handsome actor's emergence as a television star of the future began when he won a role in the BBC's version of Deirdre Purcell's novel, *Falling For A Dancer*. When he was asked to audition for the part of Danny Byrne in *Ballykissangel*, however, he was convinced he had ruined his chances. "I just did an audition at the Royal Marine Hotel in Dublin. You have days when you feel on top of the world and others when you don't. That day was one of those, I was terrible, I came out feeling about an inch tall," he remembers. "I was shocked when they offered me the part."

Col's casting in *Ballykissangel* finally convinced him he had done the right thing in cutting short his studies at the Gaiety school. "I hated it and decided not to go back and did nothing for five or six months," he explains. "When I got the part of Danny I breathed a huge sigh of relief, I knew then I'd done the right thing," he says.

Col has learned much from working with some of Ireland's most seasoned professionals on *Ballykissangel*. "For me it's a lesson. I watch everything, there is so much to pick up from these people," he says. On television it is a constant flow of images. You get here and you walk into a pub which is actually a set and there are people running around you with lights and cameras."

Col's character, Danny, arrives in the village on the back of his beloved horse. His skills as a horseman proved vital. "I wouldn't say I was a great rider but I can make it look as if I might be for 30 yards or so," he shrugs.

He may have turned his back on a career as the new David Beckham, but even in *Ballykissangel*, Col could not escape being connected with the ubiquitous Spice Girls. During filming Col discovered that the magnificent white horse he is seen riding in the series had been seen previously in the last scene of a Spice Girls video. "He had Geri riding him bareback," he laughs. "No wonder he was so frisky."

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

Characterisations

Áine Ní Mhuirí (shopkeeper Kathleen)

For actress Áine Ní Mhuirí, the role of busybody shopkeeper Kathleen has given her public recognition across the world. But she has had to wait until this series for Kathleen to discover – or rediscover – romance.

"An old flame appears on the scene, somebody whom she knew 35 years ago, who brings back a little frisson to her life," Áine smiles. "The only people who know are Father Mac and Father Aidan. Kathleen goes back a long way with Father Mac, and she trusts him."

Kathleen knows everything that's going on in the village, but viewers know little about her: "She's always been interested in everyone else's business, not really revealing much of her own. She's always worried about the standards of people in the village, and has great affection for Niamh."

Kathleen knows all about the feuds between the Dillon family, Quigley, and farmer Eamon Byrne, who lost land to the Dillons. "She knew Sean Dillon's father, she was at his wedding in 1956, so she knows all the history, she's a fount of knowledge. Dillon's father wasn't liked in the village and now Sean is bringing those memories back – they're so deep, but they can be resurrected just like that."

Áine also had to turn her hand to bingo when Father Aidan has to stand in for the celebrity who normally calls the numbers. "She has to coach Father Aidan how to do the job properly; it's a monster bingo and Kathleen's a regular, so she's the only one who can train the priest."

"She loves Father Aidan, he has that holiness, the quality of being uncorrupted by modern life after 10 years in a monastery. That comes out when he seems to have cured someone's illness by laying on hands, she believes that he is capable of healing."

Between series, Áine managed to fit in a play, *Síve*, at the Palace Theatre in Watford and the Tricycle Theatre in London. "That was great fun, and I still managed to get home to Dublin for Christmas. I enjoyed being in London, as I had time to go and see a few shows at the National, and Maggie Smith in *A Delicate Balance*, which was delightful. I did a little part with her many years ago in a film called *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, I played her friend in that."

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

Characterisations

Bosco Hogan (Doctor Michael Ryan)

When Bosco Hogan was told that he would have to ride a horse during a race on the sands (Episode 6) – traditionally won by his character, Dr Michael Ryan – it held no fears for the Dublin actor.

"I hadn't ridden for about 10 years; I don't have the opportunity nowadays," Bosco says. "But I learned to ride on the beach in my youth, on holidays in Kerry. My first riding experience was on the sands, and when I was 17 or 18 I took part in races on the beach. I loved it."

In some Irish towns, including Dublin, it was not uncommon for horses to be kept in flats or houses, as stabling costs money: "It does happen," says Michael, "But there are great efforts to have horses registered, with proper accommodation for them, as a lot of them were left to wander around the roads."

Bosco Hogan also came up with the idea for the story in Episode 5, involving a bear which has been released by a zoo, but his plans for Dr Ryan and vet Siobhan to take centre-stage did not pan out exactly as he'd planned. "The final story didn't actually involve Dr Ryan, which was disappointing, but I've heard the episode has worked out extremely well." He didn't even get to meet the bears - the production hired two, Sooty and Sweep from Chipperfield's Circus, who did different shots – and it was all done with cages and clever camera work.

The idea for the *Ballykissangel* "bear" episode was inspired by a conversation with one of Bosco's sisters, who is chairperson of the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. "I hear lots of stories from her about various things which are happening to animals around the country, and the idea came out of one conversation."

Bosco's wildlife experience, however, is even more alarming than discovering a bear in Fitzgerald's pub in *Ballykissangel*. "I made a film for Disney some years ago, called *Race For Survival*, in which I played a game warden in a safari park in Kenya," he remembers. "I worked with a lion (which they brought over from California, as it had been trained), alligators and a cheetah. I even had to ride on the lion's back for one scene!"

Dr Ryan is no slouch when it comes to modern medical practice, either. When vet Siobhan Mehigan decides to go for a water-birth, Michael Ryan is quick to embrace the idea.

"He's quite progressive, and whatever makes his patients happy is all right with him, and water births are medically sound. The father, Brendan, is a little less keen, though!"

Drama

11 x 50 minutes

Ballykissangel

Series 4

Characterisations

Peter Caffrey (garage-owner Padraig O'Kelly)

Ballykissangel's success has taken Peter Caffrey into strange and uncharted waters. "In the last year I've played an Anglican minister, a gay television producer and a transvestite," he laughs. "I can't complain that I'm not getting the variety of roles any more."

In Padraig, Caffrey has created one of the most credible characters in the series. "I think *Ballykissangel's* popularity has got a lot to do with the fact it's about real people and real life and people like to identify with that," he says. "Padraig seems to ring true to a lot of people. So much so, that I get a lot of letters asking me what is going on with the rest of the village."

Caffrey has contributed some of his own ideas to the show over the years. He has been influential in suggesting the direction his character moves in the new series. "I haven't put up possible storylines as many other actors have. It is more a case of suggesting flavours," he says. One of Padraig's most powerful storylines – in which he battles with alcoholism – was the result of Caffrey's input in particular. "Padraig is in danger of going to rack and ruin," he says. "I think it makes for some powerful stuff."

Away from *Ballykissangel*, Caffrey has become one of Ireland's most in-demand actors. His turn as a transvestite came in John Lynch's movie *Night Train* in which he stars alongside John Hurt and Brenda Blethyn. "It wasn't a lifelong ambition to be honest," he says. "But you don't have to be a mass murderer to play Hitler and I always enjoy a new experience. It was, um, interesting," he adds with an ironic arch of an eyebrow.

It has been Caffrey's success in the acclaimed low budget heist movie *I Went Down* that has added to his celebrity in America. "I have met tourists around town here in Dublin who have come up to me and praised both of them."

Despite several visits to Los Angeles, where he has stayed with friends like Liam Neeson and Brenda Fricker, Caffrey is unlikely to be drawn to California.

"I don't fancy Hollywood at all. It's no coincidence they call it Tinseltown – it's all glamour and no substance," he says. "I'll be 50 next April and I think the time for that might have passed. I think I'll leave the field free for Leonardo di Cappuccino or whatever his name is..."

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

Characterisations

Deirdre Donnelly (veterinary surgeon Siobhan Mehigan)

For *Ballykissangel* vet Siobhan Mehigan, a night of passion with teacher Brendan Kearney leads to an unexpected baby – and perhaps even marriage. "We've had a bit of a friendship going which kind of occasionally drifts over the line into something more," smiles Deirdre Donnelly, who plays Siobhan.

"She finds she's pregnant and is in a bit of a state for many reasons, partly because she's in her 40s, she's not married, and she doesn't particularly want to be married. So she has quite a lot of decisions to make about all that, and whether she would make a mother as she's so tied up with her vet work.

"She decides to go for a water-birth after doing some research into it. When we shot that scene, quite a few characters got involved and it took a whole day, off and on. It was very enjoyable for me, they put in aromatherapy oils and warmed up the water, so it was nicest day of work I've ever done!"

In *Ballykissangel*, Siobhan has to cope with a reluctant father in Brendan, who is unsure what his role will be. "He's driving Siobhan mad because he keeps telling her what to do. She's getting on with it, being very practical, and he's fussing around like an old mother hen." Eventually, the prospect of marriage looms (Episode 10). "For very practical reasons, mostly because of the child, Aisling, rather than because of love or passion."

Professionally, Siobhan gets involved with some pretty unusual animals, including an escaped bear which ends up in Fitzgerald's pub (Episode 5). "I come along with a tranquilizer gun to calm him down --and it was a large bear, the real thing!" Deirdre remembers.

"We had several sick foxes in one episode. They're very smelly animals, they stink! They're pretty unpredictable, you have to be careful with them as they're not trained, but they're lovely. I preferred the horses which appear in an episode where there's a race on the beach; they were beautiful animals."

When she's not shooting *Ballykissangel*, Deirdre fills the time doing voice-overs for radio and TV commercials.

"I started doing voice-overs when my daughter, Lucie, was born and I've done it for about 14 years now. So it's something I enjoy and it fits in well with *Ballykissangel*. I'd like to do more theatre jobs, but it's difficult to make it fit in with the filming schedule."

Drama

11 x 50 minutes

Ballykissangel

Series 4

Characterisations

Joe Savino (Liam, Brian Quigley's right-hand man)

The title of Joe Savino's popular Irish sitcom somehow sums up the transformation his life has undergone in the last four years.

"The show is called *Upwardly Mobile*. That's certainly what's happened to my career since I started playing Liam," he smiles. Savino records his show in the final months of each year, soon after filming ends on *Ballykissangel* in the Autumn. "For the rest of the year I just chill out," he explains.

There is little danger of Savino taking his situation for granted, however. "I've had the bad stuff as well," he says. "I know there will be a time when this won't be around." If he ever feels his feet leaving the ground, the Dublin born actor conjures up the memory of a Monday morning in a city dole queue shortly before joining the cast of *Ballykissangel*.

An accomplished stage actor, Savino had spent the weekend basking in the glory of an acclaimed production of *Juno and the Paycock* on New York's Broadway. "It was huge, sold out, Arthur Miller came to see it, could have run for a year," he says, his eyes dancing at the memory.

"I always remember taking the last curtain call on the Saturday, there was flowers the lot. On the Monday morning I was at the dole office in Dublin. Another actor friend was there as well and he turned to me and said, 'It's a long way from Broadway'. Too right it was."

"Acting is such an up and down profession, you can be up there one minute and down. You have to make hay while the sun shines."

In the new series, Liam continues to invent new ways of making a mess of the simplest situation.

"Liam and Donal are still up to nothing at all basically. But for them even nothing ever goes right," he smiles.

He, for one, sees no reason why the show should not keep him in the style to which he has become accustomed for a little while longer yet.

"I'd be very surprised if it didn't go on. There's enough in the people that we have created in that village to sustain it for a long time yet."

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

Episode Synopses

1.All Bar One

Fitzgerald's bar is to be sold off to the highest bidder. Brian Quigley has got his eye on the place and uses his sidekicks, Liam and Donal, to ensure he's got a good chance of winning, by putting off other potential buyers. In particular, local 'entrepreneur' Bella Mooney (**Pauline McLynn** – *Father Ted*), who has big plans to turn the bar into a brasserie.

Niamh Egan meets a stranger, businessman Sean Dillon, wandering around a deserted farm. Back in the village, people say that Dillon used to live in the village and left under some cloud. There are dark mutterings about feuds and bad blood.

A breezy young woman, Orla O'Connell, appears in Ballykissangel, exciting some curiosity. She's looking for her brother, Aidan, the new priest, but no one knows where he is.

At the auction, there is a monumental bidding tussle for Fitzgerald's between Quigley and Bella Mooney with the entire village in attendance. Who will be the new owner of the finest bar in County Wicklow?

Written by **Robert Jones**

Director **Simon Meyers**

In this episode, viewers may also recognise **David Kelly**, who reprises his *Fawlty Towers* role as O'Reilly the builder.

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

Episode Synopses

2. He Healeth The Sick

The village has a new priest, Father Aidan. Aidan's first day at work is a great success and Father MacAnally is very pleased with him. Everything is going swimmingly, until he pays a visit to bedridden Mary Cummins (**Britta Smith**) and appears to cure her by merely administering a blessing.

Niamh and her father, Brian Quigley, are at odds about his plans to redevelop the bar as a theme pub with the help of pub renovator, Plunkett O'Reilly (**David Kelly**). Niamh walks out on her father after an argument, leaving the hapless Quigley to man the pub single-handed.

Dillon finds a wounded fox and asks Siobhan to look after it. Eamonn disapproves. Old feelings about the feud with the Dillon family are reawakened. The wounded fox's plight also awakens schoolteacher Brendan's feelings for the now heavily pregnant local vet, Siobhan.

Written by **Ted Gannon**

Director **Mike Cocker**

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

Episode Synopses

3. Bread and Water

Schoolteacher Brendan Kearney is appalled by Siobhan Mehigan's plans for a water birth for their baby, but she's determined to go ahead with it. In the event, things do not go according to plan, and everyone gets involved in a spot of improvisation when she goes into labour.

Emma, Dillon's 16-year-old daughter, arrives unexpectedly from England. Niamh gets caught up in a row between father and daughter, and Emma tears off in a temper, stealing Niamh's car in the process.

Ambrose is terrified that his boss, Inspector Foley (**Alan Barry**) will find out that he is moving in above the pub. He tries to keep up a pretence of still living in the police house, which Niamh finds ridiculous.

Quigley has a strange dream and enlists Orla's help to interpret it.

Meanwhile Father Aidan, after 10 years in a monastery, is forced to learn the value of money.

Written by **Robert Jones**

Director **Simon Massey**

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

Episode Synopses

4. Par for the Course

Brian Quigley's dreams of the perfect golf course get a boost in the shape of former Dublin bouncer Mickey "Tonto" Keeler (**Stanley Townsend**) – now a golf fanatic and lotto winner. Could Quigley finally have met his match?

It's Father Aidan's first crack at a baptism with the christening of Siobhan Mehigan and Brendan Kearney's daughter, Aisling. However, Brendan is feeling left out of the process and it is down to Aidan's diplomacy to save the day.

A mysterious horseman rides into town looking for Eamon. Danny turns out to be Eamon's great nephew, who is on the run with his horse, Razor, and seeking sanctuary.

Sean Dillon tells Emma about his plans for the family's old farm.

Written by **Ted Gannon**

Director **Simon Meyers**

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

Episode Synopses

5.The Odd Couple

There is much curiosity over the new woman in Donal's life. But "Susie" turns out to be a former circus bear, rescued from being put down by the soft-hearted Donal. Susie escapes and runs amok in the village, cornering Quigley in the bar. Eventually Father Aidan manages to tame the wild beast.

Kevin O'Kelly (**John Cleere**) secretly helps Dillon to restore an old motorbike, knowing how his father would react if he knew about it. Pdraig O'Kelly is indeed furious when he discovers that his son has befriended his arch enemy.

Brendan Kearnan is finding life a strain. Siobhan will only let him see the baby on her terms, and not at all when it's convenient.

Written by **Jimmy Doyle**

Director **Simon Massey**

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

Episode Synopses

6. Turf

The villagers are all at the beach for the annual horse race, usually won by Dr Ryan. But this year he's got competition. Danny has to win the race in order to get enough money to keep Razor, and he enlists help from Emma Dillon.

It's high noon for Ambrose. Local drug dealer Johnny Delaney (**Liam Carney**), whom he once arrested, is out of prison and looking for revenge.

Padraig invites Orla O'Connell to stay at his house, and he – and various others – get the wrong idea about their relationship. Kevin (**John Cleere**) is appalled at his father's behaviour.

Quigley's golf course sponsors the horse race. but he finds that he and his new partner, Keeler (**Stanley Townsend**), can agree on nothing – particularly golf club membership policy.

Written by **Mark Holloway**

Director **Mike Cocker**

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

Episode Synopses

7. It's a Family Affair

In a desperate attempt to get Razor back, the injured Danny steals him from Dillon's farm and rides to freedom. Emma pleads Danny's case as Dillon and Ambrose give chase.

Quigley and Keeler (**Stanley Townsend**) stage a grand opening to attract members to the golf club. Both try to outwit each other to get their own way and attract the right sort of members. And, with feckless assistants like Liam and Donal, the event really takes off...

Orla O'Connell and Niamh spend the day stocktaking in the pub. They obliquely talk about Dillon and whether Orla is interested in him. But he turns up in the middle of the conversation – much to their embarrassment.

Written by **Barry Devlin**

Director **Peter Lydon**

Drama

11 x 50 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Ballykissangel

Series 4

Episode Synopses

8. Rock Bottom

An ancient carving is discovered at an outbuilding on Dillon's farm. Everyone has a different interpretation of what the carving means: a fertility symbol, a representation of woman's sexuality and power – or the evil eye. Orla O'Connell uses the discovery as an excuse to invite Sean Dillon over for a date.

Deserted by his son and unlucky in love, Pdraig O'Kelly sinks to an all-time low and takes to drink. It's up to his friends to get him back on his feet again.

A satellite dish installed on the pub delivers not the promised football but episodes of an Argentinian soap opera, on which the bar regulars all become hooked.

Written by **Ted Gannon** and **Stephen Plaice**

Director **Peter Lydon**

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

Episode Synopses

9. Henry

Father MacAnally is visited by a former curate, Henry (**David Harewood**), now a well-known African bishop who is being promoted to the Vatican. Father Mac realises that Henry is troubled and tries to find out why.

Love blossoms when Danny and Emma get stranded on a mountainside by bad weather and have to spend the night together in a lonely cabin. It's not so great the next day when they have to face the wrath of Dillon.

When a local celebrity cancels at the last minute, Father Aidan O'Connell is forced to take on the role of bingo caller at the senior citizens' bingo night. Shopkeeper Kathleen has to coach him – a hopeless task. In the end, it is up to Orla O'Connell to save him.

When Niamh comforts Dillon over his missing daughter, she realises she has overstepped the mark.

Written by **Ted Gannon**

Director **NG Bristow**

Drama

11 x 50 minutes

BBC Worldwide

Ballykissangel

Series 4

Episode Synopses

10. History

Veterinary surgeon Siobhan Mehigan and schoolteacher Brendan Kearney decide to get married in secret. They arrange a quiet ceremony with Father Aidan, but word gets out and Niamh plans a surprise wedding reception. The surprise does not turn out as she expected.

Farmer Eamon Byrne has an accident while out with his sheep. After a search, he is found – by his enemy, Sean Dillon, who then offers to help Danny Byrne run the farm while Eamon recovers. Finally, it seems, the feud may be put to rest.

Gard Ambrose Egan and Father Aidan have a night out bowling and are chatted up by girls.

Written by **Mark Holloway**

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

Episode Synopses

11. It's a Man's Life

Tongues wag in the village when Niamh Egan leaves Ambrose holding the baby after a row. Brian Quigley proves to be an excellent babysitter for Kieran and a good ear for Ambrose, who realises that his marriage might be in trouble for the first time ever.

Kathleen meets a visitor from her past, an old boyfriend, Dermot (**Jim Norton**), who once ran off with all her money. What will she do now he has come back to make amends?

Donal comes up with a plan to recover golf balls from a lake on the golf course. However, the lake proves to be deeper than he thought and he has to employ more and more elaborate devices to find the elusive balls.

Niamh spends the day shopping and bumps into Sean Dillon. He proves to be a good listener and she pours her heart out to him.

Written by **Ted Gannon**

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

Episode Synopses

12.The Final Frontier

There's a storm brewing and the animals in the village are restless. The strange goings-on in the stratosphere attract a UFO hunter to the village: Uncle Minto (**James Ellis** – *Z Cars, One By One, Playing the Field*). He recruits Liam and Donal in a plan to get himself abducted by aliens.

Niamh engages in some plain speaking with Sean Dillon, then realises that she's made a fool of herself. Ambrose is furious with Dillon and goes up to confront him.

The storm hits and Dillon's farm is badly damaged. This is the last straw for the beleaguered Dillon, who decides he's leaving. It's up to the village to rally round and change his mind. His daughter, Emma, is also facing up to her future, much to Danny Bynre's dismay.

The series ends on a high note with a party and a mood of reconciliation, with old enemies making up and travellers returning.

Written by **Robert Jones**

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

Ratings

Episode	UK Txn Date	Channel	Time On	Audience	Share %
1	21.09.98	BBC1	2000	7.4 million	30.4
2	28.09.98	BBC1	2000	7.5 million	28.6
3	05.10.98	BBC1	2000	7.9 million	29.4
4	12.10.98	BBC1	2000	7.7 million	27.7
5	19.10.98	BBC1	2000	7.8 million	28.3
6	26.10.98	BBC1	2000	7.0 million	24.6
7	02.11.98	BBC1	2000	6.7 million	23.2
8	09.11.98	BBC1	2000	7.2 million	25.4
9	16.11.98	BBC1	2000	7.4 million	26.2
10	23.11.98	BBC1	2000	7.9 million	27.3
11	30.11.98	BBC1	2000	8.2 million	28.7
12	06.12.98	BBC1	2000	8.7 million	29.8

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

What the Papers Say

United Kingdom

"A warmly welcomed return for the series which goes on proving that popular drama can be intelligent, observant and wry."

Express Magazine

Australia

"Father Aidan O'Connell (Don Wycherley) is proving more than capable of filling the cassock of Father Peter (Stephen Tompkinson)." *TV Week*

"Who needs big city adventure when you've got Bally K? It may be a remote Irish village with a small population but it certainly gets more than its share of excitement." *Daily Telegraph, Australia*

"Of course, it's soft-centred and full of blarney, but it also can be quite addictive." *The Guide, Sydney Morning Herald*

Drama

11 x 50 minutes



Ballykissangel

Series 4

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

11 x 50 minutes