

Life & Social

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The 3.30 at Cheltenham

SHOW PROMISES LAUGHS AND INSIGHTS INTO DARK SIDE OF GAMBLING INDUSTRY

By **Ryan Butler**
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"I'll let you in on a secret: Vegas isn't the only place you can lose it all; it can happen right here. Paddy Power, Ladbrokes, all tied to that one vice: gambling".

'The 3:30 at Cheltenham' is a fast-paced thrill ride into the life and gambling addiction of Andy Williams. Andy faces his past in an electric retelling of when chasing the impossible win put much more at stake than just the horses. When the fun stops, can Andy stop?

Produced by award-winning Gúna Nua Theatre Company and proudly sponsored by Gambling Awareness Trust, 'The 3:30 at Cheltenham' promises laughs, relentless truth, and insights into the quiet dark side of the gambling industry.

This week, we sat down with Tallaght writer and star Kenneth Hudson to discuss 'The 3:30 At Cheltenham,' which performs in the Civic from February 4 to February 15.

Was it always an ambition to be a writer?

To be honest, no, it wasn't. I have always wanted to be an actor and work in the industry as an actor. A part of that, though, is reading plays and screenplays, finding what work you like, what characters you find interesting, and hoping to play one day. I am a big fan of rhythmic pieces and love Mark O'Rowe's work, especially Howie The Rookie. I love character-driven pieces and monologue plays, and I read a lot of Conor McPherson's and Lee Coffey's work, which has been very influential in my life as an actor and a writer. I fell upon writing as a way to create my own work, as there wasn't much going around because of Covid, and through that I found a way to use my creative voice in another way alongside acting.

Would there be an avenue you prefer between writing or acting? If so, why?

I love both, but I am an actor at heart. I love writing and expressing my creative voice through it and shining a light on issues I feel are important and that need an open dialogue to be had about them, but acting is my first love and where I feel most myself. There is nothing I enjoy more than receiving a piece of great writing and getting the opportunity to dive into a character and bring their story to life.

Have there been any difficulties or highlights during production?

To be honest, there have been no difficulties, and if there have been, I don't know about them. I have a fantastic production team behind me, and this show is just unbelievable at handling everything, and I would be lost without them. I would say the highlight of the show was touring the show to the Aseiri treatment centres around

the country. Being able to perform the show for those people going through active recovery and seeing the positive impact it has had on them and hearing their stories and receiving their gratitude for bringing this show to audiences nationwide to highlight not only gambling addiction but addiction as a whole was truly amazing to be a part of.

I understand that the show had a successful run in the Civic back in September, so much so that it's back by popular demand; tell us about that!

Yes, we are back on February 4 until February 15 in the Civic Theatre just after we finish our run in the Viking Theatre in Clontarf, which finishes on February 1, and then we perform the show in Draiocht in Blancherstown on February 27 (which has already sold out). It is amazing to be brought back for another run of the show and incredibly grateful that the demand is there for it. I love the Civic Theatre, and it is an honour to be able to perform there for the people of Tallaght, being a Tallaght native myself. Extremely grateful to Donal Shiels, who has championed this show from the very beginning and provided the team and me with the opportunity to get this show to where it is today.

How would you summarise your 2024?

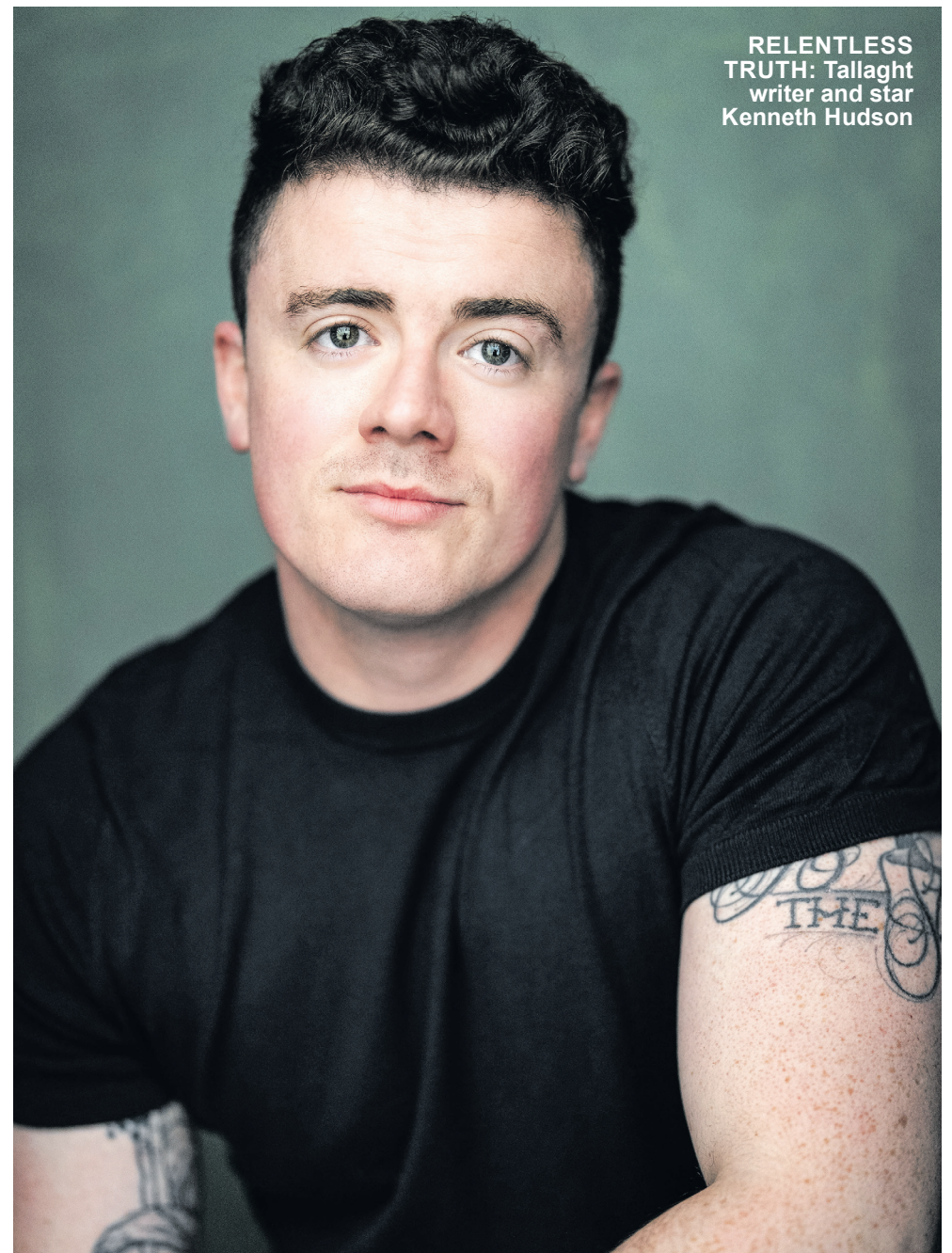
It was an extremely busy year, and it moved so fast. I learnt a lot about myself and having had so many opportunities to work with so many important people and having the opportunity to engage with so many wonderful human beings in all stages of their lives and seeing what the show has done for them really made it a year to remember. It has brought me to a place in my life that has led me to be really happy, and I do feel like I have found my purpose through it.

What are your career plans? Have they changed since our last interview? Is London and the National Theatre still on the cards?

Currently I am writing a new show that will dive into the issue of male sexual assault. I have been writing it for the last year, and I am looking forward to seeing what becomes of it. I am hoping to turn 'The 3:30 at Cheltenham' into a feature film, so I will start working on the screenplay for that after this run of the show is complete. Yes, London is still on the cards, as is the National Theatre, but this show is so important that it is the main priority at the moment. The goal is to get it accessed by as many people as possible to raise awareness about gambling addiction.

Lastly, who would you like to thank for the success of the show?

There are so many: Gambling Awareness Trust, Pam Bergin, Paul Meade, Gúna Nua Theatre Company, Darragh Conway, Ciara Meehan, Liam Wilson Smyth, Daniel Montague



RELENTLESS TRUTH: Tallaght writer and star Kenneth Hudson

O'Brien, Iris Liange, Declan King, Donal Shiels, and everybody at The Civic Theatre; Laura Dowdall and everyone at the Viking Theatre; Jonathan Quigley, Cliona Dukes, and Caoimhe Connolly of Scene and Heard and Smock Alley Theatre; everyone at the Aseiri Treatment Centres around the country; Oisín

McConville and Inchicore College. It takes a village to create what 'The 3:30 at Cheltenham' has become, but most importantly I want to thank my family, especially my Mam and Dad, for I wouldn't be where I am today without the unwavering support they have given me over my life as I have chased my dreams.

4 - 15 February

DRAMA | 8:15pm

Matinee 3pm 9th Feb

Lunchtime 1pm 12th Feb

THE CIVIC

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THE 3.30 AT

Cheltenham

