

TALES FROM

PARADISE HEIGHTS



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What is Tales from Paradise Heights?

Tales from Paradise Heights are a series of separate but connected tales, linked through characters and events all set in the heart of a crumbling coastal community, a shattered, shuttered and forgotten sea side town. They've been called 'A Chronicle of Broken Britain' and 'A Canterbury Tales for Today', but most of all they are described as 'Stephen King meets Jimmy McGovern'.

It's a place where the streets whisper secrets, where ethereal voices are carried on the bitter, salty wind, and where between the crumbling walls and stripped out shells these people call home you will find comedy, tragedy, heart, soul and humanity. You can jump on board with these separate plays at any point, watch them in any order. There's enough thrills in each to make you want to see the other tales.

At the centre of all of these tales is Frank Morgan — crime kingpin, loan shark and proprietor of The Ace of Spades club; the centre of this dark web of tales loaded with atmosphere, danger and menace. Frank appears in several productions as a living force; in others his reputation and shadow fall across the stage. There is something reptilian and devilish about his dark charm: magnetic, dangerous, and impossible to ignore.

But there's something else...

There's something strange here, uncanny, a darkness nibbling at the edges, this place where the urban meets the supernatural, a community shrouded in ghostly noir. There's an angel flitting through the tales — she used to live here — and there's at least one ghost. There's a cyclops doorman — he'll tell you the tale of the eye that died over a whiskey 'n' dry — he's a Beast who finds his Beauty, and a whole lot of trouble. Look closely for an angel of death and oh yes...a stolen baby in a jar, the twin sister of...well really, there are so many real but 'magically or tragically touched' characters that we have to stop there or we'd stray into spoiler territory. It is an ever extending universe where a passing character in one story become the focal point in the next.

Critically acclaimed, the series has a real army of fans now, some seeing the shows several times and bringing new friends to get lost in this world, a world filled with eclectic and colourful characters and unforgettable storylines engrained in a deeply haunted location.

These stories will stay with you long after you encounter them. Take a trip to Paradise Heights and find The Undiscovered Country...

**THE
BENCH**
A Tale from Paradise Heights

**DIANE'S
DELI**
A Tale from Paradise Heights

**I'M
FRANK
MORGAN
REWIRED**
A Tale from Paradise Heights

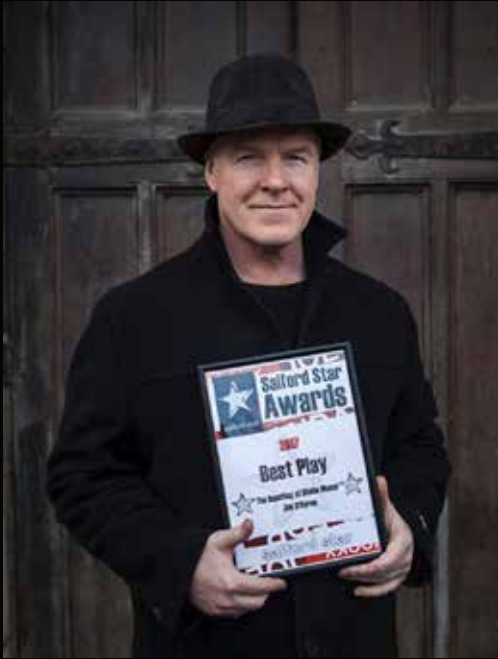
**STRAWBERRY
JACK**
A Tale from Paradise Heights

Rank
A Tale from Paradise Heights

The Haunting of
WIDOW'S LEAP FARM
A Tale from Paradise Heights

Is there a theatre creative at the moment working harder than Joe O’Byrne?

About Joe O’Byrne



Joe O’Byrne is the creator, playwright, and director of *Tales from Paradise Heights*, a cycle of interwoven plays and films that build a complete dramatic universe.

Set in a northern coastal town that feels both familiar and haunted, O’Byrne’s work fuses social realism, dark comedy, and supernatural undercurrents to create stories that are both intimate and epic in scope. He is building an ever expanding dramatic world that combines northern social realism with gothic folklore and supernatural impulse.

His plays have been described as “Stephen King meets Jimmy McGovern” - but he has his own uniquely powerful voice bleeding through these works that blend the grit of working-class life with the mythic weight of modern Greek tragedy.

O’Byrne’s characters live with laughter, tragedy, loyalty, betrayal, fear and faith in a world that seems to shift between the real and the otherworldly.

Each play stands alone — but together, they form a living mythical odyssey of a town and its people, together they map a town’s soul.

THE HAUNTING OF BLAINE MANOR

So what’s the story? Well as *The Haunting of Blaine Manor* continues to enthral audiences across the UK it’s his other creations, the plays that are part of his celebrated and critically acclaimed series *Tales from Paradise Heights*, a series of five plays with one brand new tale on the way in 2026, plays that are being booked up fast by theatres across the UK.

Some theatres have already signed up for all six plays in the series on the strength of the reviews — and having seen the tremendous success of *The Haunting of Blaine Manor*.

Others are signing up the remainder after having watched the first play when on tour; the reception for *The Bench: A Tale from Paradise Heights* was phenomenal with audiences applauding between the scenes and standing ovations at the end.

So for the more cautious theatres there is the proof of the pudding which in turn then leads to theatre management and programmers saying ‘OK, let’s have the rest...’

And that’s what’s happening. Taking this approach — the drip feed of the plays, audience reaction, reviews and word of mouth builds an army of fans for the series. What better for theatres than audiences that want to return for more, and have more well reviewed plays all from the same playwright waiting for them?

www.talesfromparadiseheights.com

THE BENCH

A Tale from Paradise Heights

Written and Directed by
Joe O'Byrne



The Bench: A Tale from Paradise Heights

It's haunted. The bench in the park. The one by the war memorial.

Over twelve months, sixteen lives intertwine around a graffiti scarred bench. A thief, a fake clairvoyant, a homeless man, two burglars, a street sweeper, two war veterans, an artist, a widow, a drug dealer, a real clairvoyant, a loan shark, an angel, and a ghost — they have all sat here at least once this year. Love, loss, laughter, and terror all pass across the aged wood of that bench.

Some people are afraid of ghosts, but it's the living that can do the real damage; and before the year is out one of them will be murdered here...

The Bench is haunting, enchanting, hilarious, and at times terrifying; it is a deeply human tale from the world of Paradise Heights.



Reviews:

Entirely gripping. Utterly enthralling. A play like Joe O'Byrne's comes along to remind us all what really matters. *Steve Balshaw, Grimmfest*

Written, produced and directed by Joe O'Byrne, this sharp and telling play features all manner of fascinating characters. Highly recommended and a play and writer that will surely go on to great things. *Kevin Bourke, Manchester Evening News*

Loved it! Wonderful gags out of left field, intrigue, suspense, heart-rending scenes and heartwarming moments. A great night of theatre! Do more! *David Slack, Manchester 24/7 Theatre Festival*

Magnificent production...wickedly delightful...wonderfully comic...terrifyingly magnificent. A diverse array of characters played by six actors at the top of their game. *Rick Lane, Midlands Theatre*

The cast are brilliant, and the plot is too. The costume and accent changes are amazing, in the literal blink of an eye they are someone different. The show enchants you, thrills you, chills you, haunts you and will break your heart. *John Kristof, Number9Reviews*

There were some really bone chilling moments... and at other times the audience could not stop laughing. Well done to everyone involved, a truly incredible production. *Tracey Fone, Better Than Words*

O'Byrne's writing has real depth as his characters give a voice to people who are rarely portrayed in such a naturalistic, truthful way in theatre... an enjoyable evening of storytelling, engaging and interesting characters who have so much more to say...this has potential to go far. *Gill Lewis, The Reviews Hub*

O'Byrne makes us care about these characters as people, and his direction is flawless. Life on the streets of 'broken Britain'. The Bench is giving it to us like it is no frills theatre with balls and undiluted attitude. *Brian Gorman, thepublicreviews.com*

Like Jim Cartwright, O'Byrne has a knack of finding poetry in the most ordinary situations: he also has real affection for his characters, and they feel like flesh and blood people. *Steve Timms, whatsonstage.com*

A wonderful play. It was gripping, it was mind blowing and what an imagination Joe O'Byrne has - no wonder he is being labelled as 'Stephen King meets Jimmy McGovern'. We were spellbound at the end. Absolutely amazing. *Steve and Chris, Radio Clatterbridge*



DIANE'S DELI

A Tale from Paradise Heights

Written and Directed by
Joe O'Byrne

Diane's Deli

All Day
Breakfast
Menu

Sausage Bacon \$4.99
Omelet Bacon \$4.99
Egg Bacon \$4.99
Sausage + Bacon Bacon \$5.99
Sausage + Egg Bacon \$4.99
Bacon + Egg Bacon \$4.99

Dinner

Egg, Cheese + Bacon \$4.99
Egg, Bacon, Cheese + Bacon \$5.99
Double Egg, Cheese + Bacon \$5.99
Sausage Dinner \$5.99
Sausage, Egg, Cheese + Bacon \$5.99

DIANE'S
DELI

MENU

DIANE'S
DELI



Diane's Deli: A Tale from Paradise Heights

Sean Ginty is a café owner in Paradise Heights. A quiet and unassuming man who wears a watch that stopped over twenty five years ago. He's a father figure to his two staff; Jake, a literature student, and Gabrielle, an artist and scarred survivor of a horrific fire that left her orphaned some years ago. It seems to be a quiet idyllic existence. But who is the mysterious Angel of The Heights, and more disturbingly - is something haunting the café?

DS Mackey from the local police, is a burnt out and bitter man with an eye for opportunity and the other eye on Sean; he is more than curious about his past.

When a woman turns up in the café late one night, a chain of events is set in motion that will have devastating effects on all of their lives...

A beautifully eerie blend of the supernatural, the dangerous. Loaded with atmosphere and desperately broken people all scarred by their pasts. Diane's Deli is a scorching revenge thriller, another compelling chapter in the world of Paradise Heights.



Reviews:

The latest play in the Paradise Heights cycle by the mighty Joe O'Byrne, a noirish tale of very bad men seeking redemption, filled with his customary dark wit, salty dialogue and bruised desperate romanticism. Yes, you should all get off your arses and go see it. *Steve Balshaw, Grimmfest*

Quietly devastating at times, raw and powerful at others. There's dark humour, bursts of romance that teeter between awkward and tender, secrets bubbling beneath the surface, and an undercurrent of violence that keeps you on edge throughout. It's gritty, gripping, and utterly compelling. All human life is here, no filter, no safety net. We loved it. And we're already counting down the days until Strawberry Jack. *Mysterious Times*

O'Byrne's writing is strong, lyrical, bold - Diane's Deli is remarkably gripping and refuses to let you go... balancing moments of human drama with acts of shocking violence. Café owner Sean Ginty - fiercely protective of his so-called 'family' of staff - he just wants a quiet unassuming life without the looming spectre of hard man Frank Morgan. Brutally emotional and slickly crafted, a thoroughly recommended excursion into the dangerously real world of Paradise Heights. *The Fiction Stroker*

Joe O'Byrne is fast gathering a cult following for his quirky urban noir series of plays set in the fictional town of Paradise Heights. Diane's Deli: A Tale from Paradise Heights played to a wildly enthusiastic audience... a brilliant, gritty and edgy production. What a night of theatre! *Rick Lane, Midlands Theatre Critic*

Not too dissimilar to a long-running drama, O'Byrne's writing is clever. He gives you enough to make the characters relatable and real, ripe for further development and exploration opportunities within the rest of the Paradise Heights series...you'll be on the edge of your seat. Diane's Deli is a carefully structured, engaging piece of drama that keeps you guessing. With themes of murder, secrets, dark humour, and plenty of surfaced secrets, It undoubtedly leaves you wanting to see more tales from Paradise Heights. *The Theatre Twittic*

The Street meets Blackout meets Five Minutes of Heaven, this powerful and very focussed play sees a man coming to terms with the sins of his past and facing them. *BBC Writer's Room*



I'M FRANK MORGAN REWIRED

A Tale from Paradise Heights

Written and Directed by
Joe O'Byrne



I'm Frank Morgan - RewiRED: A Tale from Paradise Heights

Nominated for Salford Star best drama of the year

Some say he's the Devil himself. Frank Morgan — gangster, loan shark, poker player, and owner of The Ace of Spades Club, he rules Paradise Heights with a reptilian charm. A cunning, and ruthless sociopath, a butcher, a monster — with a dangerously sharp intelligence. He's faced down the hardest men ever to walk the Heights, and they all ended up broken... or buried.

An immigrant crime wave has recently shaken his kingdom. Frank Morgan is not the kind of man to walk away from a fight. Tonight, wounded and raging the shark is at his most dangerous. Barricaded in his club, The Ace of Spades, you are trapped in there with him as the ghosts and demons from his past are queuing up to take him down.

And waiting in the dark is his most dangerous opponent of all...

The Ace of Spades is the centre of the web of Paradise Heights, a seething cauldron of the darker side of human nature. The King is not dead, he is rising, bloodied and scarred with a defiance born of Hell and a



Reviews:

What a roaring demon Frank Moran is. With nightmare flourishes worthy of Ramsey Campbell or Robert Aickman, Morgan is both Richard III and Macbeth. It's an astonishing piece and a tour-de-force performance from O'Byrne. It's a hell of a show..literally.

Steve Balshaw, Grimmfest

A real tour-de-force. A dark and compelling piece of theatre, punctuated by sharp, acidic humour. A fine and well observed performance and indicate observation of a very dark world. It will have you pondering the man and his world long after seeing the show. *John Waterhouse,manchestersalon.org*

O'Byrne gives a mesmeric and utterly disturbing performance.

Brian Gorman, Review Hub.

Made me draw on fear and feeling in a whole new way. As a character study this is first class.

I'm Frank Morgan - RewiRED was a thrill ride with fist punches.

Emily Oldfield, Louder Than War

O'Byrne is a hugely talented writer. To describe I'm Frank Morgan - RewiRED as one man play or monologue s correct, but it simply does not do justice to it, it's so much more than that.

I would love to see more of Frank Morgan.

John Fish, Number9Reviews



STRAWBERRY JACK

A Tale from Paradise Heights

Written and Directed by
Joe O'Byrne



Strawberry Jack: A Tale from Paradise Heights

Deuces are wild - not One Eyed Jacks...

Strawberry Jack Grundy was a wild child that grew into a ferocious man. Once the War Horse of Paradise Heights, recent events have stacked the deck firmly against the One Eyed Jack of The Ace of Spades Nightclub. He is now a fading shadow of the man he once was.

But the rescue of a girl on the mean streets of Paradise Heights thrusts Jack into a situation he has never faced before, untapped feelings stir, and a frozen heart begins to melt. But One Eyed Jacks aren't always lucky; someone wants Jack dead by Christmas. They say Christmas is a time for Angels...a time for miracles.

Well Jack may have found his Angel. Now all he needs is a miracle...

A Greek Tragedy for our times, and Paradise Heights very own Cyclops; Strawberry Jack cuts a beautiful scar into the supernaturally tinged streets of Paradise Heights.



Reviews:

The dialogue is pungently, darkly witty, shot through with unforced pathos and flashes of real poetry. But it's also Paradise Heights. And even Charles Dickens wouldn't go there without someone riding shotgun. With a master storyteller's skill, O'Byrne sets up all of the mechanisms that we know will damn and destroy his protagonist, then puts them into motion...Strawberry Jack finds Joe O'Byrne at the top of his (considerable) game. *5 Star Review, Steve Balshaw, GrimmFest*

Yet another classic piece of theatre from the mighty Joe O'Byrne. The Bolton-based writer/director/actor unleashed his latest creation, Strawberry Jack, and delivered yet another 5 star effort. More twists and turns than Tarantino, a good deal more originality than any Guy Ritchie geezer-fest, and comes straight from the heart. O'Byrne's aim is true, and if you're fortunate to be in the line of fire, then whatever you do, don't duck; stand rock steady and take everything he offers. Give him and his incredible cast and crew your undivided attention. *Brian Gorman, The Public Reviews*

Gritty urban drama that cements O'Byrne's reputation as a first rate writer/director, and the new Jimmy McGovern. *Reviews Hub Best of 2011 List*

Blasts onto the stage causing a tornado like trail of human debris. Deceit and murder and doublecrossing happen without a blink. With O'Byrne's repeating theme of ghostly apparitions and voices echoing through the ages, Strawberry Jack carries on from the other plays in the series very nicely (yet still a stand alone story). A message from beyond. A memory misremembered. A forgotten love that ultimately brings about the final deadly blow. I loved the play. I urge you to give it a go. *Mysterious Times*

Vibrant and expressive in one moment yet veeringly vicious in the very next. It truly is an acting masterclass from O'Byrne and his cast of meticulously crafted characters - grips you by the scruff of the neck in a way that compels you to indulge yourself in the rest of the stories from the world of Paradise Heights. Get yourself down to a showing unless you don't like having your mind blown. Two or three times over, that is. *Rais Etat, Salford Now*



Rank

A Tale from Paradise Heights

Written and Directed by
Joe O'Byrne



Rank: A Tale from Paradise Heights

It's Halloween in the Heights, and the Storm of the Century is rolling in off the Irish Sea to the bay town. But something is coming through on that storm, something not of this world...

As the storm crackles across the airwaves disrupting communications, strange voices whisper through the radios at Lucky Cabs, and a mysterious caller wants a taxi to a house that burned down years ago. Out on the streets, there are sightings, wailings — and something moving in the dark. At the centre of it all is Lisa MacGeehan, boss of Lucky Cabs taxi rank. Her decision to turn grass after a local gangland shooting has left her business boycotted, her drivers threatened, and her nights haunted by more than guilt.

Whatever is out there in that storm, Lisa knows it's heading for the rank.

With riots flaring, the police stretched thin, and Death himself stalking the town, Lisa must face the ghosts of her past — and survive the longest night of her life.

Featuring characters from *The Bench* and *Strawberry Jack*, *Rank* is a taut, supernatural urban thriller — in the flavour of Jimmy McGovern meets Stephen King on the storm lashed streets of Paradise Heights.



Reviews:

This is hardcore drama of the first degree... *Stephen Kingston, Salford Star*

It was a beautiful piece of work. Gripping, moving, woundingly well acted, particularly by remarkable lead actress, Jeni Williams, man she was brilliant. The whole cast were... it deserves to run and run. Jim Cartwright has got some serious competition in the local playwright states.

Steve Balshaw, Grimmfest

Jeni Williams really packs an emotional punch as rank owner Lisa, providing a subtle and highly emotionally engaging performance. The strength of this production as with most of O'Byrne's pieces lies in the writing, as he has a style that juxtaposes sharp dry humour with searching and searing dialogue. *Rank* is a success but don't go to see the show if you are looking for an easy ride as this most certainly isn't one.

John Roberts, whatsonstage.com

Rank, O'Byrne's latest creation - and possibly his best...maintains an almost unbearably tense atmosphere. It's all grounded by O'Byrne's language, his ear for authentic voices rooting all his work in realism and an authentic world we all recognise...permeated by the supernatural. His characters are tough yet romantic, grounded and believable. With names and faces reoccurring throughout the different stories of *Paradise Heights*, you get a real sense of depth and thought - it deserves to be seen by a wider audience.

Aaron Lavery, Manchester Metro



The Haunting of WIDOW'S LEAP FARM

A Tale from Paradise Heights

Written and Directed by
Joe O'Byrne



The Haunting of Widow's Leap Farm: A Tale from Paradise Heights

A stand alone sequel to the award winning *The Haunting of Blaine Manor*

Something killed Leanne Tully. An ancient evil as old as the cliffs; it's in the air, the sea, the soil. Leanne is back, and the Devil is loose in Paradise Heights.

Paradise Heights is a sea side town where superstition clings like salt to the skin. When Leanne Tully is found broken at the base of the Widow's Leap cliffs, the community offers a swift conclusion: another troubled soul gone to the sea. But Pearl Tully — the sharp-eyed medium (last seen in *The Bench: A Tale from Paradise Heights*) knows better. Her daughter didn't jump. She was murdered.

With the police having buried the case as a suicide, Pearl seeks an unlikely ally: Phil Mackey, a disgraced and half-broken former detective (last seen in *Diane's Deli: A Tale from Paradise Heights*) now holed up in a rusting caravan on Widow's Leap Farm overlooking the very cliffs where Leanne died.

What begins as a reluctant favour becomes a descent into a nightmare. Mackey uncovers whispers linking Leanne's death to several unexplained, grotesque incidents in the town — deaths that make no earthly sense.

Leanne had been courting forces far beyond the comfort of her mother's occult practices. Obsessed with witchcraft and Paradise Heights' bloody history, she was drawn to a lonely field on the farm atop Widow's Leap — the same place sixteenth-century witches were hurled screaming to their deaths.

Leanne's final legacy: a series of audio tapes in which she claims to commune with a witch from that age, Fleur Manderlay. But something else is on the tapes, something dark, malevolent, haunting her.

As Mackey listens, investigates, and unravels, one truth becomes harder to deny: something ancient has awakened. And beneath the storm-lashed cliffs of Paradise Heights, the Devil may be walking again. And a dark figure with an iron grip on the town, crime kingpin Frank Morgan, is warning him as a friend to stay away from the case as he is convinced ancient supernatural forces are at work.

Featuring characters from the critically acclaimed Tales from Paradise Heights series of plays.

The play will premiere in 2026



England, 1953
Something has awoken...

THE HAUNTING OF BLAINE MANOR

Written and Directed by
Joe O'Byrne



The Haunting of Blaine Manor

Winner of The Salford Star Best Play of the Year Award

England, 1953. Renowned American parapsychologist Doctor Roy Earle, famous for discrediting hauntings and exposing fake mediums, is invited to attend a seance in Blaine Manor, said to be the most haunted building in England.

However, Earle's arrival awakes something horrific within the manor's walls. As a raging storm closes them off from the outside world, Earle and his companions find that what is waiting within the manor is not nearly as horrific as what has entered with them.

In the spirit of M R James, England's most accomplished ghost story writer (*Casting the Runes, Whistle and I'll Come To You My Lad, The Haunted Doll's House*) and with a nod to the classic black and white film classics of Columbia Pictures, Metro Goldwyn Mayor, Universal Pictures and 20th Century Fox. O'Byrne's award winning production is a love letter to both the Golden Age of Hollywood and the Hammer Horror era. An appreciation of the fabulous characters played by the likes of Vincent Price, Peter Cushing, Bette Davis, Peter Lorre and more. It's a thrilling haunted house chiller set in a manor with a twisted history of madness, witchcraft, tragedy and death, it's the new *The Woman in Black*.



Reviews:

A horror masterclass from one of our very best and busiest writers. *The Salford Star*

Shocking reveals and really fantastic character work from the cast, *The Haunting of Blaine Manor* feels plucked out of the old BBC Ghost Stories for Christmas and is highly recommended. *Bloody Flicks*

As a theatre reviewer for the last 25 years, I have seen practically every touring production to grace the stage. *Blaine Manor* is up there jostling for first place amongst my favourite all time shows. O'Byrne's exquisitely chilling play had the full house literally spellbound. As theatre macabre goes *The Woman in Black* is the supreme ghost story. *The Haunting of Blaine Manor* now richly deserves that accolade. *Rick Lane, Midlands Theatre*

This gothic thriller delivered everything you could hope for in a classic ghost story - atmosphere, tension, humour and a few delicious shivers down the spine. The entire cast were phenomenal. It's classic theatre done with love, precision, and a touch of Northern soul. So if *The Haunting of Blaine Manor* is coming to a theatre near you - go. Experience it. *Peter Hopkinson, Bolton Live*

A superbly crafted ghost story, with all the pace of a hard-boiled detective thriller, tinged with Hollywood glamour - and a good old dose of horror. *The Grimsby Telegraph*

One of the best original ghost stories I've seen on stage in a long time. The atmosphere in the theatre was fantastic. Everything you'd expect from a strong piece of theatre rooted in Victorian gothic horror... a great piece of theatre. *The Nantwich News*

The story itself feels as though it has been pulled straight from the gothic archives, and the cast's portrayals breathe macabre life into a superb tale of the supernatural. The play wraps its cold, dead fingers around your spine and anchors you to your seat. If you have been considering seeing this play, I highly recommend that you do. *spookymersey.com*

The direction by O'Byrne is impeccable, ensuring every moment is packed with tension and intrigue... every scene a blend of suspense and theatrical flair. *stageside.co.uk*

It boasts a fantastic, intriguing story that keeps you hooked from start to finish. *The Reviews Hub*

This certainly is one of the best ghost stories I've seen in a long time. I can't wait to see it again. *Teeside Mercury*



ORIGIN OF

PARADISE HEIGHTS

Birth of an Empire: The first steps into Paradise Heights...

The original Tale from Paradise Heights started life as part of a novel I was writing way back in 1997 - that novel was entitled PARADISE HEIGHTS and the protagonist was a teenager called Billy Howcroft who was in all kinds of trouble. I'd started writing the novel a year before I came to Salford University as a student on the B.A. Media and Performance course. Every now and again I'd dig the book out and do a little more writing on it.

So, I'm in my second year and I have to pass a module on 20th Century Theatre acting. My tutor was a guy I held in huge esteem, a real firebrand and passionate teacher - and a constant inspiration to me, he remains the same to this day - the only difference now is that he is a very dear friend - that tutor is Mark Bishop. Our assignment was to perform a 10 minute monologue. I asked Mark if he ever got a little bored with seeing the 500th version of Hamlet or King Lear etc., and would it be possible for me to write something and perform that instead?

Mark allowed me the weekend to write whatever I had in mind and bring it in for him to go over on the Monday. Fantastic! Now all I had to do was come up with something... panic set in as my mind kept coming up with the most stupid ideas imaginable.

So, to calm myself I thought I'd take my mind off it for a couple of hours and do another chapter in PARADISE HEIGHTS. I always read a little of what I wrote last, picking up the threads as it were. Frank Morgan was a background character in the book, and I read a short passage of dialogue - the first dialogue Frank's character has in the book... it was like the guy was talking to me...sounds weird now...those few lines of dialogue spoke to me and I thought 'YES! That's a great starting point!' I could extend that into a 10 minute monologue.

I started writing and I just couldn't stop, it was like Frank was tearing his way out of the book and he became something else. By the end of the weekend I had a full one act play - I'M FRANK MORGAN. I handed it over to Mark on the Monday morning. After I handed it in I began to panic again - he'd think I was an idiot or sick in the head or something, then I got a phone call from him...shit! He must be really mad at me to ring me at home.

'How long did it take you to write this?' He said. I said I'd wrote it over the weekend. 'Bollocks!' I told him it was true, I'd wrote it that weekend. 'It's one of the best pieces I have ever read. Come and see me tomorrow morning.' So I did and he gave me some great editorial notes on it, then passed the script over to Paul Murphy, another mentor of mine from Salford Uni. 'Have a look at this Paul, Joe wrote it over the weekend.' So Paul took it away and rang me that night...we had a series of calls, he offered to direct me in the full one act play, he then rang back and said it would make a great radio play and should we do it as that instead? I agreed. He then rang back and said 'NO. This is a film...'

Paul went on to direct the film, producing a powerful piece of work that will stand up for a very long time. The film won an award in the 2000 KINO Film Festival, and Paul went on to be a very successful TV director in his own right, directing on many well known TV productions - Hollyoaks, Brookside, Waterloo Road, Casualty and Holby City. Some of the current crop of Waterloo Road episodes are directed by Paul.

WHO IS FRANK MORGAN?

“We all love a good villain and Frank Morgan is right up there with the most evil ever created in any literary work...”



**Shots from the the original short film *I'm Frank Morgan* (before it became a stage play)
Written by Joe O'Byrne and Directed by Paul Murphy**

Above all of this, shot through the community like the writing in a stick of rock is one man, Frank Morgan. The Irish gangster, loan shark, Ace of Spades club owner and gambler casts an ominous shadow across the whole of The Heights. The instincts of a wolf, the intelligence of the most tactical general, a psychopath and ferocious force to be reckoned with, and he'll smell a lie before it even leaves your tongue.

He's built his empire from the ground up, he's the Crime King of Paradise Heights. A man who's terrible deeds in the first ever Tale from Paradise Heights still sends ripples throughout the other tales. Such is his influence that his presence is even felt in stories he does not appear in.

A man haunted, sometimes literally, by his past. As each tale unfolds it is another step in the ultimate destiny of Frank Morgan, one of redemption or damnation. he future is still not set for him, or the residents of The Heights, all the bad roads here lead back to Frank Morgan.



Picture: Darren McGinn



Picture: Karen McBride



Picture: Shay Rowan

FILMS FROM

PARADISE HEIGHTS

THE WATCHER



The Watcher : A Tale from Paradise Heights

There are many Tales from Paradise Heights...
and tonight is Halloween.

A little girl sits by her window, scared by 'the man' outside.

A family man, begins his lonely night-time vigil.

A taxi-driver, begins a shift that he will never forget.

And a loan shark stalks the streets, still haunted by his past...

This is the tale of The Watcher

Review: The Watcher

A stand-alone piece. It also serves as a fine introduction to the world of O'Byrne's Paradise Heights cycle an effectively eerie little ghost story, with a powerful emotional undertow. O'Byrne uses the supernatural primarily as a metaphor to explore themes of guilt, moral weakness, failure, regret and loss. The film has a jaw-dropping final twist that shakes the viewer's perception of everything that has gone before...

Steve Balshaw, Salford Film Festival & Grimm Up North Festival Programmer

The Watcher: A Tale from Paradise Heights was born directly from the pages of the play RANK. The play was always confined to the cabin/office of Lucky Cabs, Lisa's taxi rank, deliberately done to raise the claustrophobic atmosphere for the audience on that Halloween night in Paradise Heights.

During the play we 'heard' one of the drivers radio in. Marek, made a very disturbing call in to the rank as something happened to him, or he encountered something whilst out on the road, out on a lonely stretch of the estate. Athlone Avenue, the place where Frank Morgan had burned that house down all those years ago. Hearing it worked wonderfully as the audience could only imagine what it was he experienced.

But then I got to thinking; wouldn't it be interesting to shoot a short film that showed just what happened out on Athlone Avenue that night?

Another stand alone Tale from Paradise Heights (it had to work on its own as a tale) but also a tale that connected directly to Rank and also right back to the origin of the series – I'm Frank Morgan.

A perfect opportunity arose as The Lowry approached me with a view to showing Rank and I'm Frank Morgan as part of their DIGIT Fest of June 2011 – all well and good. They also asked if I could write, produce and direct a new film for the series and premier it at The Lowry as part of that festival. So I wrote The Watcher to tell Marek's Tale, a tale that took place the same night as the events of Rank. The question that remains is who is The Watcher? Is it the little girl at her bedroom window? Is it Marek as 'our eyes' as he drives us through the narrative? Is it the anonymous faces behind the masks? Is it the 'smoking man' outside? Is it loan shark and murderer Frank Morgan? And just who is monitoring those CCTV monitors? The audience always have an answer.

It was fantastic to see the success of The Watcher, but more than anything it was such a joy to do. The best time I have ever had on a film set and incredibly encouraging to get out there again and film another story. So many incredible talents worked on this, in front of and behind the camera's and in post production, and this was done with a shoestring budget. Can you imagine what we could do if we had a decent budget?

The film was produced by the prolific Chris Lane and Ian Curley with Colin Warhurst as DOP. Chris and Col were already a very well known talented partnership (BOG STANDARD) and this was the first collaboration with a unit outside Tales from Paradise Heights. So many other talents were involved, Barry Thompson producing his first film score did a wonderful job, Holly Wyatt worked alongside Barry creating the haunting soundscape for the film, re-using and building on music and effects Barry had already produced for Rank, the films sister production. Stunning on set photography was provided by Gareth Hacking, Ben Mottershead and Daniel Warhurst. With a poster by Michael O'Hanlon, lighting by Paul Anderton, make up by Emma Wilcox, on set sound by Phil McDuff - in fact so much hard work by all the cast and crew.



Writer/Director Joe O'Byrne
and Actor/Producer Ian Curley
(Marek) on the set of
The Watcher



Colin Warhurst (DOP)
Joe O'Byrne (Writer/Director)
Chris Lane (Producer)

FILMS FROM PARADISE HEIGHTS

The Night Death Put Me Down : An Animated Tale from Paradise Heights

In autumn of 2018 I got together with long time Tales from Paradise Heights collaborator Darren McGinn. Darren has been responsible for the posters, trailers and general identifiable imagery of Tales from Paradise Heights down the years. His work has been nothing short of fantastic and is often the first thing that sells the tale, the story, the iconic imagery that invites you the audience in. The series has now bridged film, theatre, poetry, art, graphic novel, novel and musical form - the next step I wanted to take was animation. Darren had done some animation in the stunning trailers he had produced for the series over the years so I asked if he was up for it. He was.

Now deep within the Tales from Paradise website there is a page of poetry of mine that I add to from time to time, at least a couple of them would make good stories, and would lend themselves well to the cinematic frame, I asked him to have a look and I kind of knew which one he would pick... The Night Death Put Me Down



I drew a few story boards around look and feel (above), sat down with Darren and with sound and music man of The Heights - Justin Wetherill, and we were off. Darren recorded my voice over at his house, Justin set to at his place on sound and music and Darren set off to do the majority of the work. Darren's load was 3D character building, world building and animation sprinkled with a few sound effects of his own - all the long hours of arduous work, with a couple of meets with me along the way and further discussion on how to shape the film. The film was also the perfect opportunity to give nods to the other stories in the series, so there are Easter eggs galore in the film, with nods to the Paradise Heights tales I'm Frank Morgan, The Bench, Rank, Diane's Deli and Strawberry Jack - there's even a shot of Red, the fox from I'm Frank Morgan: RewiRED. And a few chat's with Justin and his final score for the film is perfect, haunting and profound. The whole film put together by three people, not bad.

A special mention in terms of Darren's artistic ability here, with a number of characters from The Heights instantly recognisable, among them Shirley - the angel of Paradise Heights seen in The Bench, Rank and Strawberry Jack - and mentioned in Diane's Deli, Strawberry Jack mentioned in Diane's Deli, Rank, I'm Frank Morgan: RewiRED and of course his own play, and then there's Danny the traumatised ex fire man now living on the streets seen in The Watcher. The other characters? You'll see in the final film... Check the slideshow below for some of Darren's fantastic renderings in the film...



MUSIC & SOUNDS OF PARADISE HEIGHTS

Justin Wetherill - Sound and Music Composition

Justin is a composer, multi-instrumentalist, recording engineer and sound designer. He is experienced in scoring for film, theatre, corporate, and animation, along with sound designing for podcasts, film and theatre. Justin has also worked in many post-production roles, including dialogue clean-up and replacement, audio editing, mixing and mastering. To date, Justin has recorded over 500 various musicians, stage managed, and live-engineered across many venues, working with over 350 acts, covering many genres. Visit www.atmosounds.co.uk for more information.



THE GEMINI MAN

The Original Composed Sound Track,
Song & Sound of STRAWBERRY JACK

The first play to feature Frank Morgan's ACE OF SPADES Night Club. Joe worked with Tangled Man (James Trott), Stella Grundy, Holly Wyatt and Ruth Parfitt on the completely original soundtrack for the play. The play produced the first song from the series of plays, THE GEMINI MAN, a song that would be heard in Strawberry Jack.



DIANE'S
DELI

The Maiden and The Banshee

Theme from Diane's Deli: A Tale from Paradise Heights

There aren't many plays that have a theme song, not to my knowledge anyway. There are themes and threads within the play that lead us back to The Troubles of Northern Ireland. It would have been easy to look for an existing song and use that, but I felt the story should have its own song, reflecting the plot to an extent. So I set out to write one of my own — how hard could it be? So I wrote the lyrics, something that could have been over 100 years old, and it fit the tale.

I then approached Holly Wyatt, a musician and producer I'd worked with before, and she got together with Craig Edmondson and they came up with the perfect melody for the lyrics, something that needed to be military in style, traditional and somewhat haunting, perfect for the plot of the play. Finally we needed a vocalist, someone who could capture the right traditional flavour. The brilliant Denise Morgan offered her services. Denise a finalist of THE VOICE - she was on Tom Jones team, performed an absolutely stunning rendition of the song. Vicky Batrak did a great job as studio producer on the recording. It's on YouTube and you will hear excerpts of the lyrics and melody in the play.



Vocalist Denise Morgan



Studio Producer Vicky Batrak,
Musician & Producer Holly Wyatt
Joe O'Byrne and vocalist Denise

ART & DESIGN OF PARADISE HEIGHTS

Darren McGinn - Production Art & Design

Darren McGinn has been a fan of the series for quite a while. Darren is also a very talented man himself, producing some stunning photography, artwork and animation over the years. We first got together through Tales from Paradise Heights Co Producer Ian Curley on the *Rank* revamp for The Lowry. A multi media master, he has produced some seriously stunning work for *Tales from Paradise Heights* series and *The Haunting of Blaine Manor* so far and there is much more to come from him. Below is a shot of the 'dress run' of *Strawberry Jack* - which of course had Ian without his heavily scarred face. The look Ian had in the play came from the Golden Eye of Darren who produced graphic images of the look Ian would have in the play. Darren also creates the quite stunning visual realisations in the *Tales from Paradise Heights* and *The Haunting of Blaine Manor* trailers. Some of Darren's many production concepts and promotional artwork designs are also below.





Paradise Heights



*Ace of Spades
Nightclub*



Memorial Park



Diane's Deli



Lucky Cabs



Milton Towers Estate



*Trawlerman Jerry's
Boatyard*



Widow's Leap Farm