

# BLACK POOL



A FILM BY DUSTIN MORROW

## Director's Statement

*Black Pool* is a film about Irish history and Irish identity, particularly as they relate to the conflict in Northern Ireland, and how that identity is tied to questions about religion, politics, economics and culture. The conflict technically ended in April of 1998 with the Good Friday Agreement, but only on paper. The tension that exists between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, even if it's now more below-the-surface. Brexit is stressing the region, as it raises a lot of questions about the management of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland once Northern Ireland leaves the EU with the rest of the UK.

I have a friend from Belfast who, at the height of the Troubles, discovered her cousin lying facedown in a ditch. He had been executed by the IRA. I know that more than four decades later this image still haunts her. She's told me stories of growing up in a working-class part of Belfast, walking to school everyday, hurling rocks at Catholic kids and dodging the rocks that were thrown back. Hearing gunfire and explosions in the distance. Seeing fires burning in the streets, marches with chanting unionists and nationalists, and soldiers with machine guns patrolling the neighborhoods. She lives in America now, and has since she was a young woman. She's thousands of miles and forty years from those events, and yet the images linger.

Ireland has long been a nation of immigrants. People have been driven from its shores for hundreds of years, for a number of reasons, from the Great Famine of the 1840s to the economic collapse of the 2000s. James Joyce once wrote that Ireland is a nation that confers honor only upon those who've left it. With *Black Pool*, I wanted to tell a story about the conflict in Ireland, and contemporary Irish identity, through the lens of immigration. What must it be like to feel as though you were expelled from your home? The two men who engage in a deadly game of cat-and-mouse in the film are both adrift, from two different, but both inherently Irish motivations. They've left their homeland to seek something better in the U.S., only to find that they can't outrun the past.

William Faulkner once wrote, "The past is never dead. It's not even past." *Black Pool* is about a man who allows one incident, one small moment from deep in his past, to proceed to inform every action of his life for three decades. Like a cancer, it eats him alive, from the inside out. He kidnaps and interrogates a man he believes is responsible for all of his pain, but the interrogation is really of the self. It's a reckoning. He's been on this collision course with violence and chaos for a long time, and it finally comes to a head in this one terrifying night. The film is, in some ways, about imprisonment - both literal imprisonment and imprisonment to an idea.

When you are a prisoner to your own thoughts and ideas, what happens when you can't break free? Where do you end up? What happens when you just *can't let it go*?