

# THE HOLE TRUTH

Best known to Northern Ireland audiences as The Hole in the Wall Gang - Tim McGarry, Damon Quinn, Michael McDowell and Marty Reid first got together in the 1980s while studying at Queen's.

They soon decided to abandon their original Pythonesque style of comedy in favour of Northern Irishness. Their first foray into radio *A Perforated Ulster* earned them a Sony award for Best UK comedy. Their first venture into television saw them win an RTS award for *Two Weddings and a Ceasefire* - and it was this that set them on the road to TV stardom with their hit show *Give My Head Peace*.

The sitcom quickly made household names of Da, Cal, Uncle Andy, Ma, Dympna, Billy and, of course, Big Mervyn. Not forgetting Red Hand Luke, Pastor Begbie and a host of other weird and wonderful characters. First broadcast in January 1998, it ran for 73 episodes, 10 series, several one-off specials and a few foreign trips, with the last ever episode shown on BBC NI on 27th December 2007. As a definitive, if somewhat skewed, history of our last 10 years, *Give My Head Peace* is hard to beat - and unlike most histories, is very funny. In 2008 the Gang was honoured by Irish President Mary McAleese at a special reception in Dublin. (They are currently awaiting the knighthoods.)

Meanwhile, in 2006 the Gang created the *Dry Your Eyes* sketch show for BBC 1 Northern Ireland. Running for two series, it introduced a colourful collection of instant favourites including the McDowell Brothers, Arthur Heckler and Betty the Cleaner all of whom firmly reinforced a post-Troubles theme.

Over the last few years the much-loved characters from both TV shows have taken to the road on tour, playing sell-out live theatre shows in everywhere from Belfast to Omagh.

The Gang has written two film scripts and are currently working on a sitcom based in Belfast for BBC1 network.

In the last year the Gang branched out into serious drama and wrote the critically acclaimed *Scapegoat*. This period drama about the murder of Patricia Curran in 1952 appeared on BBC1 in October 2009.

Michael McDowell directed it, Damon Quinn produced it and Tim McGarry went to the pub and told people about it.

Plus Damon produced an awarding short film *The Crush* and Tim did his one man show *Tim McGarry's History of Ireland* at the Belfast Festival. The show will be on tour across the province in the Autumn.

