

HAILED as "the future of concert films", *U2 3D*, the first ever live-action 3D feature film, premieres at the Dublin Film Festival next week. Its initiator and co-director Catherine Owens today has Hollywood at her feet. This Dubliner's work has shaken up the industry.

"Not just remarkable, but historic, the film has ushered in a new era for 3D films," is one example of the critical acclaim it has received in the States so far. U2 placed their trust in Owens - the visual artist who has been curator of their concert visuals since the Zoo TV tour in 1992 - to reinvent them in the futuristic world of virtual reality. The bet has paid off in spades.

Owens is currently in LA doing the rounds of press interviews. She is "completely thrilled" to have found a way to capture those fleeting magical moments of performance but she admits making it was arduous. "Let's just say that it has been a long year-and-a-half. It's two years since we shot it but it's a year-and-a-half in the edit room. Shooting 3D is the same as shooting 2D. But making 3D - which you do once you get into the post-production phase - is really complicated."

U2's manager Paul McGuinness is a fan. "You have to be tenacious to get something like *U2 3D* made - it takes a mixture of diplomacy, toughness and a very good eye. Catherine is now one of the only people in the world who understands that hideously complicated post-production process."

The film, shot on the South American leg of U2's *Vertigo* tour, is a continuation of her ongoing collaboration with the band. "We made a conscious decision to make a film about the relationship between the band, and then their relationship with their audience. The subtleties of Adam's and Larry's performances brings are often overlooked in the world of capturing the bigger moment. People just get caught up in the tinsel."

Owens and U2 go back a long way. Her break into the music world started in Dublin's Dandelion Market in the late 1970s. She briefly played bass in all-girl punk band The Boy Scoutz, initiated by Steve Averill of punk band The Radiators from Outer Space, who went on to design all of U2's album covers bar one.



EVEN BETTER THAN THE REEL THING

'U2 3D', the first ever live action 3D film, has received rave reviews in the States. Its maker, artist Catherine Owens, tells **Deirdre Mulrooney** about her most successful collaboration with the band

"If you loved music in Dublin at that time, you had to be in a band," she says. "It wasn't enough to buy the records." It was around that time that Adam Clayton approached her backstage at the Project Arts Centre after a gig. "He introduced himself. You know, two bass players, one talented and one not. We've been friends ever since."

"That was definitely the beginning of my relationship with everybody. Through that whole scene - the Dandelion Market, New Romance clothes store, Murray's Record

Store at the top of Grafton Street, where we met the Virgin Prunes and then Ciaran [Owens, her brother] went on to manage them. It's a relationship which we



have all kept going over all these years."

Soon after that she hung up her bass guitar to head for art school in Belfast. "Some-

foggy punk-rock mind was the fact that I really wanted a degree and Belfast was the only college offering that."

There she met her mentor, performance artist Alistair McLennan. "Alistair to me is one of the greatest living artists. His work was so humble, about being in the moment and being your work. Not making it, being it - 24 hours a day."

In 1984, she went to New York for the first time to exhibit her work. No sooner did she touch down at JFK than "I went home, repacked

my bags and moved back to New York, where I shared an apartment with three others on the Lower East Side."

She put herself at the cutting edge of the New York arts scene. "I hung out with people like Oh Superman vocalist Laurie Anderson, composer Philip Glass and theatre director Robert Wilson. Then there was the whole Village gallery scene with Keith Haring, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol," she says. "I did do a significant amount of nightclubbing because that's where the art world was at that time. Music, clubbing, dance, performance - it was very tied up in each other." Meanwhile, she continued painting - "with my big canvases set up in the living room".

Fastforward to 1992 and U2's idea of incorporating more visuals into their tours. Owens was appointed curator of visuals for those legendary screens, starting with Zoo TV. Popmart, Elevation, and *Vertigo* followed. She directed the motion-capture video for 'Origin of the Species' and now has outdone herself with *U2 3D*.

As well as working with U2, Owens' art continued to develop with exhibitions like *Balls* at the Project Arts Centre, *Self-address* at Cork's Triskel and *In* at the Hugh Lane Gallery.

"I really enjoy collaboration - which is something that's difficult to maintain as an artist in the art world. The natural set-up for an artist is not collaborative. It's isolationist, almost," she says. This collaborative impulse was evident early on in her solo work, for example with knitwear designer Lainey Keogh in *Balls*.

After the Dublin Film Festival, she can't wait to get back into her Co Waterford studio. "I'm going to see what's next. I've been doing some nice drawings since I've been in LA." She's also planned a collaborative piece for the Kinsale festival next year with architect Felim Dunne.

As for the transatlantic lifestyle: "In some ways that's less of a lifestyle and more of a revolt. It's a necessity. For a long time I was wondering: 'Where will I live? Will I live?'"

"Not being around the family is hard. But they are all creative thinkers and are all very supportive." (Her late father, Peter Owens, of the Peter Owens agency, was a legend in Dublin advertising.) "Ireland is home. It's where you go to have your spirit nurtured. New York is my place of work."