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James Martin: From Belfast barista to Beverly Hills

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The Oscars



Martin, 31, is one of the stars of *An Irish Goodbye*, which won an Oscar for best live action short film, just weeks after it clinched a Bafta.

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Filmed on location in Londonderry, Templepatrick and Saintfield, Martin previously said an Oscar win would "put the icing on my birthday cake".

Who is James Martin?

The broadcaster Ivan Martin was told when his son was born with Down's syndrome that he might never speak.

"But here we are. James not only speaks, once he started speaking he hasn't shut up since," Ivan Martin told BBC News NI, just hours after the Oscar win.

And what a journey it's been for the former pupil of Harberton Special School in Belfast.



| James Martin was in festive mode jamming on his harmonica in an Irish pub in LA

From treading the boards in Belfast, Martin landed the lead role in the BBC drama *Ups and Downs*, alongside actress Susan Lynch.

Written and directed by fellow Irishman Eoin Cleland, who has a sister with Down's syndrome, the film focuses on the story of a young man with Down's Syndrome wanting his own independence.

"He wants to get his voice to be heard," Martin told BBC News NI at the time.

"It makes him more open and honest with his family and that's good too."

Martin then went on to get a part in the ITV and Netflix drama *Marcella*.



| James Martin's father Ivan celebrated at home in Belfast with a miniature Oscar statuette

Directed and written by Ross White and Tom Berkeley, it tells the story of two estranged brothers who came together after their mother's death.

The black comedy, set on a rural farm, stars Martin as Lorcan, alongside Seamus O'Hara who plays his older brother Turlough.

Ivan Martin said that everyone involved in the film had "every right to be proud of themselves".

"It's won an Oscar not because James has Down's Syndrome - it's a damn good film and they all acted their socks off in it. Deservedly it's been recognised," he told the Press Association.

Ahead of the ceremony, James Martin showed up in a Los Angeles pub - playing his harmonica for a rendition of Dirty Old Town in a jam session.

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Mencap ambassador



| 'Holding this Oscar is just fantastic'

"I'm the first person with Down's Syndrome not just getting a Bafta but also getting an Oscar, especially in the time of my birthday - it's just fantastic."

His girlfriend, Barbara Norris, who is also a Mencap ambassador, told BBC News NI's Talkback programme it was a magical moment and "the icing on his birthday cake".

"It shows to everyone that it's changing your mindset on how people with disabilities can achieve as much as everyone else can," she added.

Martin is a keen runner and has previously taken part in park runs with The Falcons - a group of young adults with learning difficulties, who are part of the Queen's parkrun community.

He can also be spotted at Irish league grounds on the weekend - often accompanied by his dad.

The day job



FLOODLIGHT

| An Irish Goodbye sees two brothers reunite as they try to come to terms with their mum's death

But having traded his green apron of Starbucks for a swanky leopard-skin jacket at the Oscars, will he be swapping the kitchen for the stage permanently?

His dad said despite the fame, he couldn't see his son leaving his jobs "any time soon".

And Ivan Martin couldn't be more proud.

"What an achievement, I'm just delighted," he told BBC News NI.

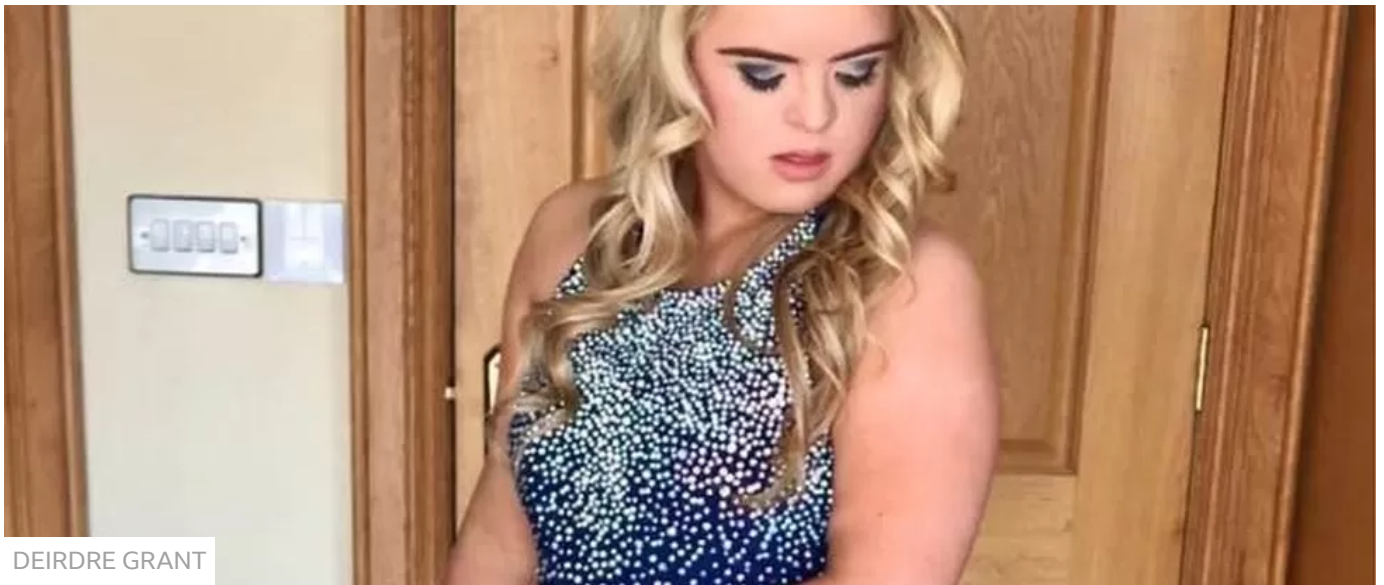
"I haven't been able to get him - he was at the Elton John After Party.

He said his son tackles everything with great gusto - and that has now paid off.

"He loves the acting, he's loved this ride with the Oscars and the Baftas," said Ivan.

"All I ever wanted for James was that he'd be happy; I'll tell you what, he's happy now."

'Iconic'



DEIRDRE GRANT

| Kate Grant, pictured in 2017

Her mother Deirdre said Martin's win was "a representation of what people with disabilities can do".

"All people with disabilities have dreams, hopes and aspirations too. It is an iconic moment," she said.

"James will inspire so many people coming behind and give so much hope."

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