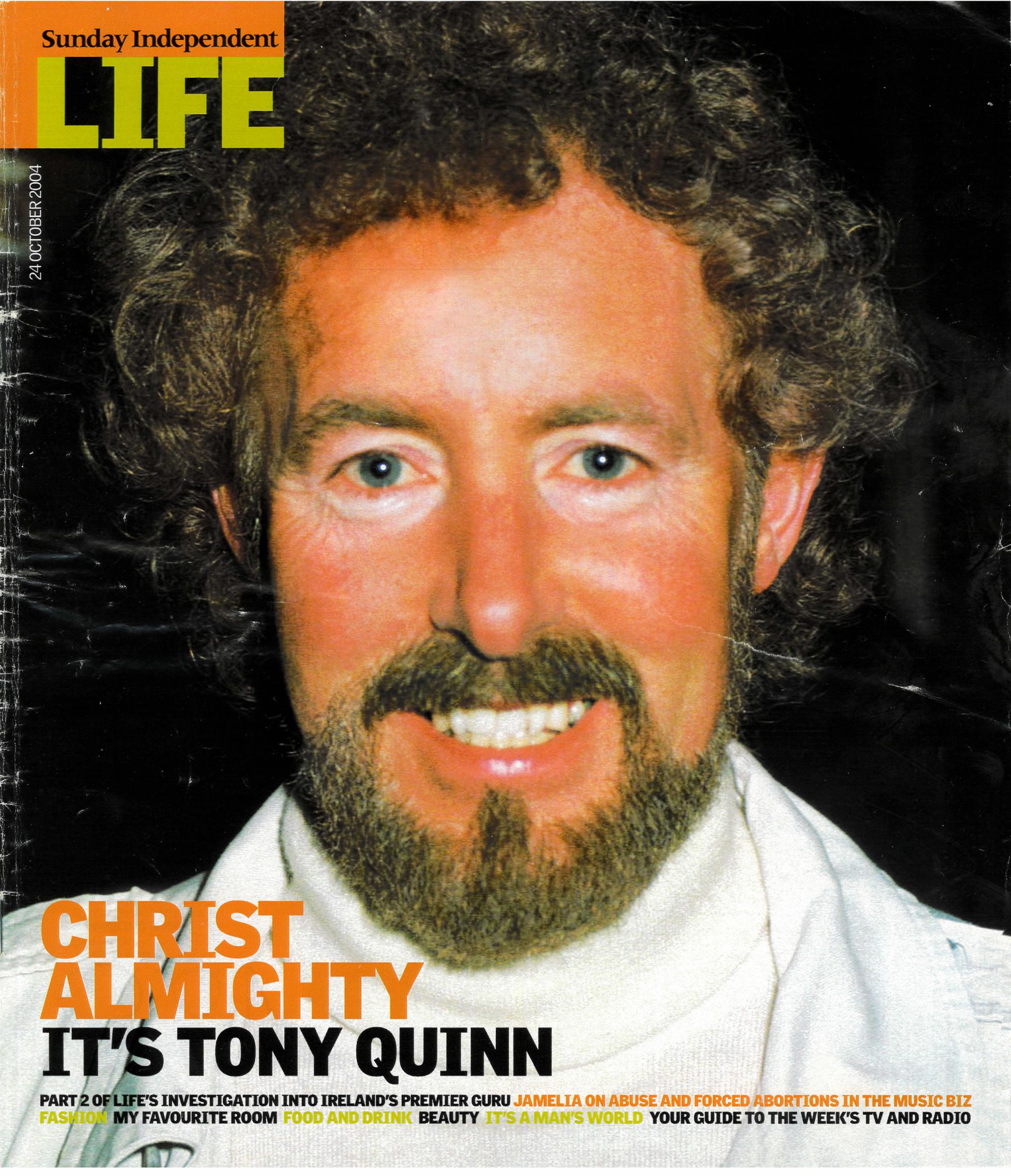


Sunday Independent

LIFE

24 OCTOBER 2004



**CHRIST
ALMIGHTY
IT'S TONY QUINN**

PART 2 OF LIFE'S INVESTIGATION INTO IRELAND'S PREMIER GURU **JAMELIA ON ABUSE AND FORCED ABORTIONS IN THE MUSIC BIZ**
FASHION MY FAVOURITE ROOM FOOD AND DRINK BEAUTY IT'S A MAN'S WORLD YOUR GUIDE TO THE WEEK'S TV AND RADIO

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Cover Tony Quinn. Photo by Photocall Ireland



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BETTER LIVING THROUGH CHEMISTRY

Tony Quinn, left, and new world champion Steve Collins wearing Educo T-shirts in March 1995, just after Collins had defeated Chris Eubank



DAVID MAHER/SPORTSFILE



Tony Quinn's advertising promises personal and financial success, but despite the achievements of winners like Steve Collins, there are those who are less enthusiastic. **Donal Lynch** hears the tales of some unhappy people who have undergone his courses

THE MIGHTY QUINN

PART 2
OF LIFE'S
INVESTIGATION

In the 1970s, anything even vaguely 'new-age' was viewed with suspicion. The Catholic church had exclusive custody of our spiritual lives and the competition was denounced as charlatans from the pulpit. The words 'yoga' and 'cult' seemed to belong naturally together in a sentence. But by the 1990s Ireland was a very different place. Yoga was suddenly cool and self-betterment was the new religion. The clergy were in turmoil and the market was open for a different style of preacher, someone with big muscles and infomercial charisma, to come to our spiritual rescue. Tony Quinn's time had come.

By this stage, Quinn had gone mainstream. His shops were occupying shopping-centre units alongside Boots and Marks & Spencer, and the Tony Quinn branded health supplements were big sellers. He was also achieving vicarious legitimacy by his faint association with various Irish success stories. The increasingly slick looking *Blueprint for Successful Living* (Quinn's promotional newsletter) included unctuous interviews by Tony with celebrities such as Niall Quinn and Gabriel Byrne.

However, Quinn's greatest publicity coup occurred in 1995. Middleweight boxer Steve Collins enlisted his services for his world title fight with Chris Eubank in Millstreet. In the run-up to the fight, Collins talked publicly about his work with Quinn while Eubank

claimed that it was unfair to fight a man who had — supposedly — been hypnotised to believe he could not lose. Collins, of course, won on points and Eubank later admitted that Quinn's involvement had played on his mind. In photographs taken after the fight, Quinn is to be seen in nearly every shot. The running joke was that he was to Collins as Charlie Haughey had been to Stephen Roche when he won the Tour de France in 1987. An innocent bystander could have mistakenly believed that it was the guru, or the politician, who was the real world champions.

Quinn boasted it was actually possible to make Collins bleed less and to prevent bruising and swelling, but this claim was dismissed by others. Harry Mullan, then editor of *Boxing News*, said: "That's rubbish — the skin does not have an intelligence of its own. You can't tell it to heal itself." Others such as Paul McKenna and John Butler, a consultant at the Royal College of Nursing, criticised these aspects of Quinn's practices.

Quinn's role in Collins's success was somewhat disputed. Quinn claimed he had not merely helped to psyche Collins up for the fight but had also negotiated the boxer's contract with promoter Frank Warren. In an excerpt from Collins's autobiography, (available, naturally, from the Tony Quinn online health store), which Quinn quotes in his promotional material, Collins wrote: "Tony explained to me that most people, despite having the potential to realise their

ambitions in life, never do... once a person is taught to take full control of his mind then his inner potential can be drawn out."

However, more recently Collins has taken a few steps back from this statement and has been quoted as saying of Quinn, "He was one of many people who helped me on the way. I used a couple of hypnotists to help me focus. In my opinion, the best of all was Tony Sadar." Collins would continue to defend his world title without Quinn's help.

Nevertheless, Tony Quinn was able to leverage his new status as guru to the stars to bring his message to an even wider audience. *The Blueprint for Successful Living* newsletter had begun to advertise classes where people could get techniques on giving up smoking and "learn to use more of their mind". The classes were a huge hit. In venues such as the RDS in Dublin, hundreds of people from all walks of life would gather and watch rapt as Quinn stood on a podium and delivered blustering speeches on self-improvement.

But although the classes were successful they were in reality no more than a recruitment drive for his latest venture: the Educo Seminars. These were two-week courses held in exotic locations around the world where, for £15,000 each, participants could "learn to realise their potential and achieve their goals". People were told that if they really wanted to solve their problems, the seminar was the ultimate one-stop solution. At the end of the Dublin classes, a

BETTER LIVING THROUGH CHEMISTRY

group of suntanned Educo converts would take to the podium to gush about how Tony had helped them change their lives and Quinn's associates would then aggressively market the seminars to those present. Possible candidates were told that they would be provided with information "so vital you can't truly live without it". Those who had completed the seminars had "increased their ability to achieve goals by up to 67 per cent". Their businesses apparently increased their turnover by an average of 360 per cent and if you still weren't fully convinced they were shown a graph which indicated that upon completion if the seminar their "satisfaction with life could increase by up to 55 per cent". All of these statistics, they were told, were "researched under university conditions". The university or body which researched them was, as usual, not named.

Many people balked at the amount of money involved but were told that it was a minor investment when measured against the benefit they would receive. Those who could not afford it were urged to get a loan but advised that it might be a good idea not to tell the bank manager what precisely the money was needed for. Others were warned that their family and friends might express misgivings or be against the idea of going on the seminars but this is because they were "living in fear". They also learned that there was the added incentive of "a discount" of several thousand euro if they could recruit others to go on the seminars.

The seminars have been highly lucrative for Tony Quinn. Each seminar yields over €1m, with the potential for much more if more than a handful of the participants avail of one-to-one sessions, which cost €100,000. Quinn pays no tax on these monies as they are channelled through an offshore company called Human Potential Research, which is based in Guernsey.

In the course of researching this article, I spoke to many people who had actually been on these seminars. Most refused to go on the record and told me that they wanted to put the whole thing behind them, but one woman has courageously and for the first time agreed to speak about what it was like on one of Tony Quinn's seminars. To protect the privacy of her family, she requested that I only use her first name.

Caroline first came into contact with the Tony Quinn organisation when she attended a six-week course at the Spa Hotel in Lucan, Dublin. She had undergone numerous operations and was having trouble sleeping. "I would wake up absolutely terrified, covered in sweat," she told me. "I was approached after the classes by a woman called Yvonne. She told me, 'Tony will be your saviour.' I wasn't sure about the whole thing but, bearing in mind that I was desperate, I agreed to go on one of the seminars."

In the summer of 2000, Caroline's ticket to Cairo was delivered by courier. "Yvonne flew with me because I am afraid of flying and I had missed the first flight. We travelled to Heathrow where Martin Forde [a long-time associate of Tony Quinn] and his wife Margaret met us. We left Yvonne there and they travelled on with me. As soon as the plane took off, I became upset again."

When Caroline got to Egypt, she felt she

had already been earmarked as a troublemaker and was totally ignored by Tony Quinn staff. Despite the hefty fee of over €15,000, she discovered she would have to share a bungalow with others. But that was the least of her worries. As soon as Quinn came to address the group, Caroline knew she had made a mistake.

"He just wasn't making any sense," she told me. "He was talking a load of crap about leading the life of your dreams. He was speaking very slowly to us, telling us we needed to 'get in the flow'. We were encouraged to get up and start screaming and roaring, and nearly everyone did. I didn't know what to do so I got up and went down the back. It scared the life out of me, I can tell you."

Caroline was appalled to find that any kind of dissent was discouraged during the talks by Quinn. "I went to put up my hand and one of the people organising it motioned to me to put it down again. A guy came up from behind me and told me that it was being filmed so we weren't allowed to ask questions."

Caroline noticed that the staff and the participants on the seminar revered Quinn. "He was spoken about like he was Jesus Christ Almighty. I spoke to one guy — John was his name — who told me that he had come out there [to Cairo] to find out Tony Quinn's answer for Ireland. The women worshipped him. I was standing waiting to go to the ladies on the first week when Tony Quinn happened to walk by on his way to answer nature's call. The girl beside me grabbed me on the arm. 'Did you see that?' she said. 'It's Tony Quinn and he's actually going to the toilet!' I was amazed. 'What did you think he does?' I said. They didn't believe he was flesh and blood."

Caroline could feel her health deteriorating and, isolated from her family and friends, she felt helpless and alone. "I had a sort of breakdown," she told me. "I was left in a room on my own for days on end. After a few days, two men arrived in a white van at the bungalow. They took me to a hospital in the middle of the desert. I was incredibly upset at this stage, crying and everything. They sedated me."

Caroline's husband had not been informed of her exact whereabouts or condition. She was eventually flown back to Dublin. "When my husband met me at the airport my clothes were dirty even though I had packed more than enough for the two weeks," she recalled.

Caroline still can't quite believe what happened to her. "It took me a long time to come to terms with it. That's why I'm only speaking about it now." She still gets the odd Tony Quinn flyer in the door. "They go

Marcus's backer, also a Quinn devotee, has invested over €1m in the singer 'who hadn't a note in his head'





KEN FINNIGAN

straight in the bin, I can tell you. People need to know what they're getting into. I hope you're going to write that in your article."

When asked about Caroline's account of her experiences at the seminar, Martin Forde said: "There was clearly a pre-existing medical condition — which you, not I, mentioned — which is obviously inseparable from the rest of what she says."

However, it seems clear from what Caroline says that she was not properly screened before being allowed to participate in the course. This was long been a concern of those who have followed Tony Quinn's progress.

In a letter which has been seen by *LIFE*, Dr Robert Verkerk, a research scientist at Imperial College London, submitted a number of findings at the request of the Tony Quinn organisation. He suggested that Tony Quinn should open channels of communication with Dialogue Ireland, a body which offers "pastoral support for people who have returned from Tony Quinn seminars and are feeling disorientated or are in some form of distress" and for family members "who are coping with behavioural or other changes in their loved ones". He went on: "The codes of conduct relating to the public demonstration of catalepsy are published by some major, internationally recognised professional bodies (eg International Society for Professional Hypnosis) and these should be heeded as far as possible." He also suggested that the School of Psychology at the University of East London (UEL) should become involved in the editing of material to ensure its scientific accuracy. He received no response to this letter.

Verkerk mentioned UEL presumably because he knew that Quinn, the man who modestly calls himself "a philosopher", is currently a student of that college. Professor Brian Clifford is supervising Quinn's doctorate on Educo. I spoke to Professor Clifford who told me that Tony Quinn's claims for the Educo systems in his business life were of no concern to the college. When I asked whether Dr Quinn's previous doctorate from the American Pacific University would have an impact when this one was being awarded, Professor Clifford told me, "No, we don't count that one." He also revealed that Tony Quinn's thesis had just been returned to its author with heavy notations, and that I could "read into that what you will". He added that he hoped and expected that Quinn would eventually get his doctorate from UEL.

As Quinn continues to add to the alphabet of letters after his name (some of them meaningful), in the last few years he has once again complemented his seminar work with some celebrity pet projects. Last year, he famously met with Jim Sheridan, whom he knew through Hugh O'Donnell, father of Quinn's girlfriend Tara (who, posing as a member of the public, gives yet another glowing testimonial on Quinn's website), with a view to making 'a sort of sci-fi film'. Sheridan had met Quinn once before when he was interviewed for the *Blueprint for Successful Living*. On that occasion, Sheridan noticed nothing untoward, but this time around Quinn's tone was different. Sheridan was quoted as saying: "He was telling me all

sorts of stuff about himself, some of which I couldn't believe. He told me he was walking along one day when all of a sudden a group of Middle Eastern people appeared to him. He told me he was walking on sand and he followed the people to the top of a hill. He said that there were thousands of people there and he thought he heard Jesus speaking to them, but then he realised that it was him. This is verbatim what he told me. I found the whole meeting unnerving." Needless to say, the 'sci fi film' never made it off the ground and Sheridan has severed contact with Quinn.

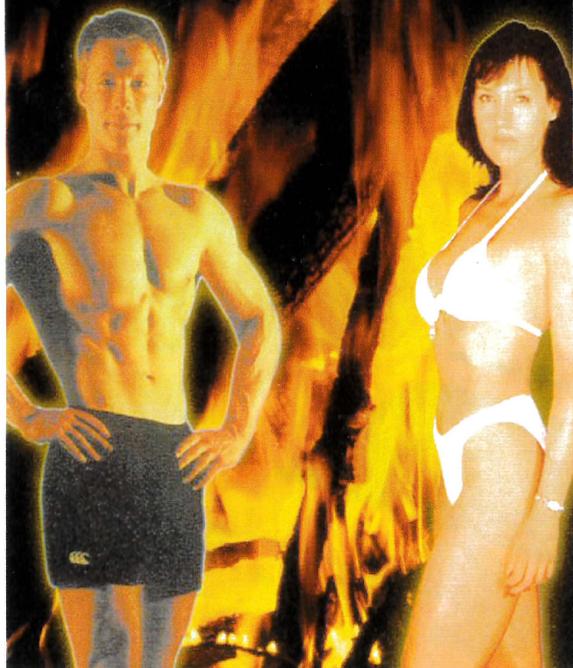
But not everyone in showbiz was immune to Tony's charms. Marcus Henry Fearon was a waifish, bespectacled redhead who had won young Person of the Year for his charity work with Concern. After attending a Tony Quinn seminar, he decided that he wanted to be a superstar and went on a strict diet with the goal of building his slight frame into something more photogenic, just like Tony Quinn himself once had. With the financial backing of fellow Tony Quinn enthusiasts, whom he met at Quinn's Educo seminar in the Bahamas, Marcus travelled the world in pursuit of his dream, dismissing lavish recording studios because the vibe was not right or there wasn't enough gym equipment. While most aspiring pop stars were queuing in the rain to meet Louis Walsh and Phil Coulter, the man referred to by fellow Quinn followers as "an enigma" was hanging out at the prestigious Abbey Road studios in London where he told an astonished producer that money was no object.

Unfortunately for all concerned, Marcus had two problems that no amount of seminars or money would fix: he did not look anything like a pop star and, in the words of producer Bill Hughes, "hadn't a note in his head". However, thanks to Tony Quinn, he did have a surplus of groundless self-belief. Viewers of an RTE *True Lives* documentary on Marcus winced in embarrassment for him as he was filmed singing out of key for Michael Jackson's voice coach and patronising Will Smith's well-meaning stylist in his thick Dundalk accent. At meetings to discuss Marcus's potential, his minders and handlers would freely quote Tony Quinn to each other. Marcus himself gave an unconscious parody of the seminar speak: "I think if I live the life of a star I can train the mind to think it's successful, even if... maybe... it's not." His financial backer, also a Tony Quinn devotee, invested over €1m in him but to date the closest Marcus has ever come to stardom is that painful-to-watch documentary.

Although Tony Quinn's Educo system claims it can open the door to worldly success and increase turnover, not everyone is so successful. It was recently reported that the group of companies owned by Galway-born builder Brian Cunningham owed First Active €29m. Cunningham's group had been involved in several high-profile developments. He owns Salthill Properties, which developed the €30m Bailey Point Project in Salthill. First Active foreclosed on the group and now Cunningham is suing them. Cunningham had gone on a Tony Quinn seminar and, to the distress of his family, had become very committed to Quinn's philosophy.



Could you stand the heat for just 12 days...



Previous page Marcus Henry Fearon in *Miracle Studios*, his recording studio in Dundalk, October 2002

Above Tony Quinn, far left, is visible inside the ring as Steve Collins is swamped by the media after his win against Eubank in 1995

Left The Tony Quinn website offers a 'total body transformation' based on 'ground-breaking university research'

Strangely, stories such as those of Caroline, Marcus and Brian have never made it into those glossy pamphlets that stand outside Tony Quinn's shops. No amount of negative publicity seems to quell the demand for his slick snake-oil salesmanship. (As I write this, a group has just returned from the isle of Capri and another seminar is planned for November).

Quinn has written of his ability to reverse the ageing process — and, at 56, he shows no signs of slowing down. The literature he has produced throughout his career shows him one minute as a respectable retailer of health supplements and the next moment as a charlatan making occult claims such as those relating to distance healing. Quinn has been issued with a warning by the Irish Medicines Board for making medicinal claims for his food-supplement products, but the dubious benefits of his seminars have never been investigated by consumer watchdog groups.

Despite the gardai being quoted as saying that Quinn's method of offering 'incentives' for people to recruit friends to go on Tony Quinn seminars "bore all the hallmarks of pyramidising" (a type of financial structure illegal since 1980), they have never prosecuted Quinn. The aftercare for those who react badly to his public displays of catalepsy falls to voluntary bodies like Dialogue Ireland and individual hypnotherapists and counsellors like Sean Collins.

'Quinn told me he thought he heard Jesus speaking ... but then he realised it was him,' said Jim Sheridan

Tony Quinn, from his mansions in the Bahamas and Miami, runs an organisation which, according to his critics, bears a strong resemblance to a cult. For his supporters and employees, Tony is "a saviour" — someone who can help to "uncover the new human being" inside. To them, the evidence outlined above must be weighed against the word of "the world's leading expert on the mind" and all that "research carried out under university conditions".

And anyway, they know that you only read negative stuff in newspapers like this. It says so in the *Blueprint for Successful Living*. ■

Dialogue Ireland can be contacted on (01) 830-9384 or (087) 239-6229, or see www.esatclear.ie/~dialogueireland/