



# Daniel Lambert

AS MANAGER of the Irish-speaking, hip-hop/rap trio Kneecap, Daniel Lambert has found himself increasingly in the spotlight as he is called upon to defend the group over their pro-Palestinian commentary and messaging. These values appear to align with the passionate and pragmatic Dubliner's own views on the subject and his measured defence of the band has helped to diffuse some of the more hysterical commentary. Then again, that might have been helped by the fact that he studied conflict resolution in college. Can he resolve the conflict with western authority and others enraged at their pro-Palestinian stance?

Now 38, Lambert grew up in Glasnevin and, aside from his involvement with Kneecap, he is chief operating officer of northside Dublin's Bohemian Football Club and co-founder, with his sister Grace, of Bang Bang café in Phibsborough. Known as a straight talker who doesn't suffer fools, he also has a sharp eye for business and holds a degree in business studies from DCU.

Lambert went from being a volunteer at Bohs to a board member in 2011, and became COO in 2020, having seen off 27 other applicants for the job. Football is in his DNA as his grandfather, Jack O'Byrne, was a founder member of the Irish Soccer Referees' Society and his dad, Stephen, set up and ran a club in Dunsink in Finglas.

Lambert hit the ground running on his appointment, immediately arranging to meet then sports minister Catherine Martin to discuss plans for a modernised multi-purpose community stadium at Dalymount Park. His powers of persuasion were clearly working, as Bohs was allocated €24.7m in funding last November for the development as part of the government's large-scale sports infrastructure fund. The redevelopment project is estimated to cost approximately €40m and is due to open in 2028.

When he took over the role, Lambert told the *Irish Daily Mail* that, alongside winning Premier Division matches, there was an inherent importance in being active in a community club and flying the flag for Phibsborough and the catchment area, which embraces Cabra, Glasnevin, Ballymun and Finglas. It was a good strategy in terms of helping to persuade the government to crank open its coffers.

Lambert told *Business Plus* that, having taken inspiration from German club St Pauli, his

commercial strategy is to get the club to use its community work, charitable donations and history to create a connection with its fanbase. "Our values piece is Palestine, Refugees Welcome and Focus Ireland," he said.

Visiting Bohemian FC's offices in the "brutalist Phibsboro Shopping Centre", visitors spot the "latest issue of *Revolutionary Communist* magazine, a Kneecap scarf, a miniature statue of Lenin's head and a print showing Bob Marley in heaven sporting a Bohemian's jersey with a halo".

The strategy is paying dividends as, under Lambert's watch, Bohs has enjoyed a surge in merchandise sales, going from €100,000 in 2014 to €2m in 2024. Its

turnover a decade ago was just under €1m, compared with €4.5m in 2024. Bohemian FC sells between 20,000 and 30,000 shirts per year, with two-thirds now being shipped outside of Ireland.

Lambert's parents were regular Dubs, who left school early but were entrepreneurial. His mum was an interior designer, dad Stephen had his own clothing business and, as a family, they enjoyed examining potential business ideas.

## COLOURFUL CAREER

Lambert's past career was colourful. After his stint at DCU, he worked in pharmaceutical sales, which was well paid but didn't give him career satisfaction. He decided to buy a Land Rover and drove to and from Mongolia with a friend for six months. He told RTE's *The Business* that he encountered a few hairy moments, including being arrested in Kazakhstan "for no reason [other than] to bribe us". Having been put into a cell, an interpreter was brought in who advised Lambert and his friend that they needed to give the arresting officers something so they coughed up and were set free.

On another occasion, our heroes had to give soldiers in a Russian military helicopter mini bottles of Jameson whiskey to avoid any hassle there.

Back on home ground, Lambert chose the rather safer route of embarking on a master's in DCU on international conflict and security, where he focused on the Nato action in Libya. He then joined the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and took a post in New York as a political advisor to the UN General Assembly in 2013.

He decided to return home because, while he felt the DFA was filled with "really brilliant people", he wasn't enamoured with the idea of being in a system for 30 years that was "pretty hierarchical" and was about longevity and slow-moving processes.

At that point, he wanted to do something completely different so he opened Bang Bang café with his sister, Grace. The café is named after Thomas Dudley, the eccentric elderly man who was famous around the Dublin streets in the 1950s and '60s. Because of his love of cowboy films, he could be regularly seen hanging from the back of double-decker buses and trams staging mock shoot-outs, which earned him his nickname.

The idea for the café came to Lambert when he was living in Brooklyn and saw interesting cafés and



## AFFAIRS OF THE NATION

bars with cool and meaningful names that were tucked away in residential streets. When Bang Bang opened, customers told Lambert about their memories of Dudley, including one customer who was involved in his burial 40 years earlier. Lambert subsequently organised a fundraiser to erect a headstone at the burial site and hosted an event to mark the occasion, which was attended by the lord mayor and a couple of hundred people.

Daniel also set up a company called Mossaddegh Ltd with his partner, Radie Peat, from the band Lankum.

He is a director of Up and Away Media, which is owned by Jamie Goldrick. Lambert produced and Goldrick directed the 2020 short documentary *Up & Away*, about the 1973 IRA Mountjoy helicopter escape, told through the eyes of four men who were in the prison that day.

Kneecap was formed in 2017 by three friends, known as Mo Chara, Móglaí Bap and DJ Próvaí. Lambert's association with them came about when he met the band in a Belfast pub and was fascinated when he overheard them speaking Irish. They got chatting and he invited them for lunch at Bang Bang when they were in Dublin the following week and the friendship blossomed. Within a couple of months, they were chatting about ideas and the band subsequently invited Lambert to manage them.

Lambert has done an impressive job of getting the band out there as they have featured in the *New York Times*, the *LA Times* and *Variety* magazine, among other widely read media. Kneecap were on the crest of a wave when their semi-fictionalised Irish-language origin movie starring Michael Fassbender won a Bafta in February 2025 and the Spirit of the Festival prize at this year's Celtic Media Awards in Cornwall.

### CONTROVERSY

But in April the group drew criticism, following their set at US music festival Coachella, for displaying screens with pro-Palestinian messages and accusations against Israel about the war in Gaza. Their subtitles accused Israel of genocide and called for Palestine's liberation, which caused the band to be dropped by their US visa sponsor and booking agent, Independent Artist Group.

Specifically, the band was accused of displaying the flag of Hezbollah, the Lebanese political and militarist organisation deemed terrorist by many western countries.

Former *X Factor* judge Sharon Osbourne weighed in on the controversy, calling for Kneecap's US work visas to be revoked for taking "their performance to a different level by incorporating aggressive political statements".

The band's pithy and effective response was that "statements aren't aggressive, murdering 20,000 children is though".

Speaking on RTÉ's *Drivetime*, Lambert said the band showed "bravery and conviction".

"If somebody is hurt by the truth, that's

something for them to be hurt by but it's really important to speak the truth," he said. "Thankfully the lads are not afraid to do that."

Talking to Miriam O'Callaghan on *Prime Time*, Lambert criticised British prime minister Keir Starmer for saying that Israel had a right to cut food and water into Gaza.

"You have a band being held to a higher moral account than politicians who are ignoring international law," he said. "Children are starving to death and we've spent six or seven days speaking about Kneecap and less than a day speaking about 15 executed medics."

### BALACLAVAS

Kneecap's logo is based on the balaclavas worn by paramilitaries during the Troubles, and DJ Próvaí often wears an Irish tricolour balaclava in public. On RTÉ's *The Business*, host Richard Curran queried Lambert on the band singing 'Get Your Brits Out'. He also wondered about the repercussions of unveiling a mural of a PSNI Land Rover on fire ahead of performing to 10,000 people at Féile an Phobail in 2022, captioned: "Níl Fáilte Roimh An RUC."

Leaders of the DUP, UUP and Alliance were among those who condemned the group and Curran pointed out to Lambert that, while these actions were opening up the Irish language in a different way to lots of new people, it might be closing it off to

others as well.

Lambert's defence and protection of his charges is always calm and measured, and his response was that controversy is subjective and that people, "especially in the North, love to be outraged".

He claimed the actions mentioned above could be interpreted in two ways and that it was "quite satirical" that DJ Próvaí wears a tricolour balaclava. The burning car and slogan was "looking back" and he disagreed with northern justice minister Naomi Long when she said that the band was stoking sectarian tensions.

Lambert insisted that the band is totally non-sectarian and that the song 'Get Your Brits Out' is about a night out with the DUP. "The DUP have probably been the best marketing tool Kneecap's ever had because they just have to say anything and they [the DUP] will jump on it," he said.

According to Lambert, the band get people from all sides of the community at their events and have far more in common with somebody from the Shankill Road than somebody from south Belfast or Killiney. He says that the band's core message is about having a system in Ireland that serves the working class far better than it does now, rather than "anything about green or orange".

Lambert is certainly a man with a persuasive vision and a diplomatic eloquence that will serve Kneecap well. While history will prove who was on the right side of the various causes the band embrace, his steady hand on the rudder will likely be needed to navigate the choppy waters dissenters are generating for some time to come.



### TIOCFÁIDH ÁR LAW

DERRY MAGISTRATE'S Court heard the case of a young woman who, on May 29, was found in an intoxicated state, lying on the road and yelling republican slogans. It was reported to the court that, while responding to a call out at 2:40am, a police car was flagged down by a pedestrian, who had noticed the defendant, Leonie McLaughlin, of O'Gara Villas, Moville, lying in the road. Believing she may have been knocked down, the officers assisted her off the road and on to the footpath. She then began yelling "tíocfaidh ár lá" and "up the IRA". The pedestrian who had flagged down the police car said that McLaughlin was seeking attention from the police. Defence solicitor Paddy MacDermott told the court that his client had "drank too much" on the night in question. Judge Ted Magill described McLaughlin's actions as "utterly unacceptable" as she had interrupted the police on a call-out. She was handed a two-month suspended sentence. *Derry News*

### OH BROTHER!

A 52-YEAR-OLD Graiguecullen man appearing before Carlow District Court was ordered to carry out community service after becoming "very agitated" towards gardaí. Ruben Obadia of 5 Brotherton, Sleaty Road, Graiguecullen, pleaded guilty to engaging in threatening and abusive behaviour and refusing to provide his name during an incident at Aldi in Graiguecullen on July 29, 2023. Sergeant Hud Kelly said a garda approached Obadia in the supermarket, leading to the defendant becoming agitated. He refused to co-operate with the officer in question and, when asked to provide his name, replied "no comment" and "fuck you". Obadia's solicitor, Alex Rafter, said that his client felt singled out by gardaí because his brother was well known to them. Judge Geraldine Carthy ordered Obadia to carry out 180 hours of community service in lieu of two months in prison. *Laois Nationalist*

### FISTICUFFS

A DRINK-DRIVER who became abusive towards gardaí when he was pulled over was convicted in *absentia* in Macroom District Court. Inspector Anthony Harrington told the court that on December 10, 2024, officers noticed a silver Audi "driving erratically" on the N22. The car kept stopping and starting, switching between lanes and at one point almost drove into a ditch, according to Harrington. The vehicle was stopped and gardaí noticed the driver, Trevor Horgan (33), of The Hermitage, Macroom, was slurring his words and smelled of alcohol. He was arrested and became abusive at Macroom Garda Station, telling officers: "Take off these handcuffs and we'll see who's the big man." When the defendant eventually calmed down and was breathalysed, he was found to be more than three times over the legal limit. Judge Treasa Kelly fined Horgan €500 for drink-driving and disqualified him for three years. *Echo*

• Suitable contributions to: *The Phoenix*, 44 Lower Baggot St, D2, or email [bogcuttings@thephoenix.ie](mailto:bogcuttings@thephoenix.ie)