

REEL SUSPECTS

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PRINTER FRIENDLY

STILL



A film by Simon BLAKE
99 min, United Kingdom, 2014
Colour, HD & DCP

LOG LINE

Still is a gritty and atmospheric thriller about the traumatic disintegration of a man and a father.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Tom Carver (Aidan Gillen) is a man stumbling blindly towards a crossroads in his life, thrown out of focus by the death of his teenage son a year earlier in a car accident. He is a talented photographer whose career has largely been unfulfilled. A chance and seemingly unimportant confrontation between Tom and a fifteen year old boy brings his life and responsibilities to the fore. A battle of wills between Tom and the gang of kids develops, on the surface trivial and childish altercations begin to take a considerable sinister direction. Tom retreats ever inwards as his life starts to unravel, until at last it reaches its painful and shattering climax.

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LONG SYNOPSIS

Tom Carver is a man who has reached a crossroads. He is an aspiring and talented photographer whose career has largely been compromised and unfulfilled. His marriage to the woman he still loves has fallen apart after the death of his teenage son in an accident, leaving him broken and alone. A good man whose equilibrium has been blown out of shape by what life has thrown at him.

A chance and seemingly unimportant confrontation with a fifteen-year-old boy brings his life and responsibilities to the fore. A battle of wills between Tom and the gang of kids develops, trivial and childish altercations begin to take a considerably sinister direction. At first the conflict is verbal, but soon the gang begin to stalk and taunt him. Tom retreats ever inwards consoled by his long term friend Ed (a crime reporter for the local paper) a lovable rogue with a hedonistic outlook and an appetite for self-destruction.

Tom develops a somewhat awkward friendship with a young ten-year-old boy who has recently lost his brother in a knifing incident. He takes him under his wing and teaches him photography. Although the relationship is completely innocent it draws Tom further into the conflicts and politics of the local gangs.

Matters reach a chilling denouement when Tom's girlfriend is attacked. Ed and Tom immediately assume the gang to be guilty and in light of the police's inability to resolve the case, they decide to take the law into their own hands. Revenge is sought bringing Tom's achievements as a man and a father into sharp and dreadful focus.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Simon has directed short films and music promos both in Britain and America, winning Best Short and Best Screenplay for his film AWAYDAY at Cinema Jove and The Valencia Film Festival. Chosen by The British Council in its Best Of British tour, AWAYDAY was screened at more than 50 film festivals.

Simon has written and produced the feature film HEAVEN'S ONLY DAUGHTER for the independent film-maker Philip Harder and a further four short films.

Simon was also the Founder and Artistic Director of the Theatre Company CHANGEINSPEAK. Described by TIME OUT as having "A deserved reputation for developing a unique style of theatre, a dynamic fusion of music, narrative and the visual" and THE INDEPENDENT as "Brave and Remarkable".

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CAST

Tom Carver – **AIDAN GILLEN**

Aidan Gillen is best known for his roles as Petyr ‘Littlefinger’ Baelish in GAME OF THRONES, Tommy Carcetti in the HBO drama THE WIRE and Stuart Jones in QUEER AS FOLK. He has been nominated for the British Academy Television Award, the British Independent Film Award, a Tony Award, and has won two Irish Film & Television Awards. His feature film credits include THE DARK KNIGHT RISES, John Michael McDonagh’s CALVARY with Brendan Gleeson and most recently Mark Noonan’s feature YOU’RE UGLY TOO which premiered at the Berlin Film Festival 2015.

Ed – **JONATHAN SLINGER**

Jonathan Slinger is best known for his extensive work with the Royal Shakespeare Company. He has starred in RICHARD II, RICHARD III, MACBETH, THE TEMPEST, TWELFTH NIGHT and HAMLET. Other plays include YES, PRIME MINISTER and Harold Pinter’s THE HOMECOMING. Jonathan has also featured in a vast number of television series, including MIDSOMER MURDERS, DOCTORS and A TOUCH OF FROST.

Rachel – **AMANDA MEALING**

Amanda Mealing is best known for her role as Connie Beauchamp, in BAFTA award winning medical drama series HOLBY CITY. Amanda has recently appeared in BBC’s DEATH IN PARADISE and CASUALTY. Her other credits include 1920s period drama series THE GRAND, CAPITAL CITY, THE DARLING BUDS OF MAY, THE BILL, MIDSOMER MURDERS and British comedy classic FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL.

Christina – **ELODIE YUNG**

Elodie Yung is an up-and-coming French/Cambodian actress who was discovered by Luc Besson. Having worked in the French film and television industry since 2004 on a number of successful projects, her international break came in 2011 when she was cast as Miriam Wu, a romantic interest of Lisbeth Salander, in David Fincher’s adaptation of THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO. Since then she has appeared in the MGM/Paramount production G.I. JOE: RETALIATION and Justin Trefgarne’s NARCOPOLIS.

Carl – **SONNY GREEN**

Sonny Green is a 19-year-old poet and rapper from Southend in Essex.

Margaret – **KATE ASHFIELD**

Kate Ashfield is best known for her performance as Liz in British zombie comedy SHAUN OF THE DEAD. She is also known for her award winning roles as Jody in the Anglo-German film LATE NIGHT SHOPPING and as Sadie MacGregor in the British film THIS LITTLE LIFE. She has also appeared in award winning WAR SCHOOL, a short film raising awareness on the use of child soldiers.

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CREW

A production by : Blunt Pictures, 011 Productions

Producers : Colette DELANEY-SMITH (Blunt Pictures) Zorana PIGGOTT (011 Productions)

Director: Simon BLAKE

Scriptwriter: Simon BLAKE

Cinematographer: Andy PARSONS

Production Designer: Mayou TRIKERIOTI

Line producer : Michael S. CONSTABLE

Music (composer): Alex GREY

Production Sound mixer : Billy QUINN

Editor: Agnieszka LIGGETT

Additional Editor: Carlos CONCEICAO, Colin EADE

Digital Colourist : Stuart FYVIE

Costume Design: Camille BENDA

Make-up: Karen FINCH, Emma SLATER

Casting: Kharmel COCHRANE

Producer – COLETTE DELANEY-SMITH

After a successful career in the financial industry where she was a COO of Barclays Bank Group Risk, Colette set up Blunt Pictures together with Simon Blake with the aim to create innovative and original films. STILL is Colette's debut feature film. Since completing STILL, Colette executive-produced COUPLE IN A HOLE by Tom Geens which is currently in post-production.

Producer – ZORANA PIGGOTT

Zorana Piggott is a London based producer. She has been working in the UK film industry for the past fifteen years, having graduated from the National Film and Television School.

Zorana made her feature film producing debut in 2003 with the award-winning THE LAST HORROR MOVIE which was released in over thirty countries around the world (including theatrical releases in the UK and the US).

She is currently producing AMSTARDAM, debut feature by the Lennox Brothers, and COUPLE IN A HOLE by Tom Geens, starring Paul Higgins and Kate Dickie. Both films are currently in post-production.

Zorana also produced CROCODILE, a BFI short film directed by Gaelle Denis which won the Canal + Award at the 2014 Critics' Week, Cannes Film Festival.

Director of Photography – ANDY PARSONS

Andy Parsons started his career as a photographer covering the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Andy is an established director of photography working on a range of high profile and award-winning commercials and short films. His credits include WHERE THERE'S SMOKE for which he won Best Cinematography Award at the 2011 Montecatini Film and Video Festival, and AMSTARDAM by the Lennox Brothers, currently in post-production.

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Editor – AGNIESZKA LIGGETT

Agnieszka Liggett is a graduate of the National Film and Television School. Her graduation short film AFTER TOMORROW was nominated for the Palm D'or at 2011 Cannes Film Festival. Agnieszka has edited a number of independent feature films including Paul Hyett's THE SEASONING HOUSE and Dominic Lees' OUTLANDERS.

Composer – ALEX GRAY

Alex Gray's career as a musician and producer has found him variously playing keyboards with indie legend Edwyn Collins, re-mixing Al Green and more recently writing hit records for LadyHawke. But it is as a composer that Alex's interest in writing music to picture has grown. After scoring the music for independent features VASILISA and 24 HOURS IN LONDON, Alex disbanded his critically acclaimed band Babyfox to concentrate on writing exclusively. Currently completing an album of Weimar sci-fi chanson for German artist Katja von Kassel, he is now based in London and he also works from his studio in Burgundy.

Production Designer – MAYOU TRIKERIOTI

Mayou Trikerioti trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School after finishing her BA honours in Drama and Theatre Studies at the University of Kent. Mayou is one of Greece's most established theatre designers. She has worked at all the country's major theatres and festivals including the National Theatre in Athens. She now lives in London where she has recently designed at the Young Vic and Riverside Studios. Since 2007 Mayou has designed feature and short films that have traveled across the globe and screened at international film festivals, including Venice Film Festival, Berlin and Toronto IFF.

Casting Director – KHARMEL COCHRANE

Kharmel is one of UK's most exciting up-and-coming casting directors. Having worked for Nina Gold casting, Kharmel started independently casting feature films in 2012, and her most recent credits include 2015 Sundance hit THE WITCH, Guy Myhill's debut THE GOOB (2014 Venice Film Festival), Duane Hopkins' BYPASS and the award-winning Film London Microwave feature LILTING directed by Hong Khaou.

REVIEWS – CRITICS - AWARDS



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'STILL is one of the most assured pieces of filmmaking I've seen in quite some time... Blake really knows how to use his widescreen canvas. Keep an eye on this film-maker as STILL promises great things ahead'

THE CHICAGOIST

'Simon Blake's debut feature is a slow burn thriller with enough heart to match its white knuckle adrenaline... The director pays homage to many classic noirs throughout the movie while keeping the story and the characters real and fresh... Aidan Gillen gives a heart breaking performance'

MUSIC & FILM DEFINED

'This debut feature from writer-director Simon Blake shows great promise... The devilish Aidan Gillen gives a sensitive performance... Amanda Mealing contributes a fine performance as the hero's estranged wife, her scenes with Gillen are the movies high point'

THE CHICAGO READER

'What makes STILL really pop and feel alive – aside from the phenomenal directing – are the performances from the two leads, Aidan Gillen and Amanda Mealing.'

WEGOTITCOVERED

'Simon Blake's gritty, surprisingly poignant thriller... Gillen's magnetic presence... Sonny Green in a remarkable feature debut...'

INDIE OUTLOOK – SIX FILMS TO REMEMBER AT CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Of all my projects, STILL is the film I am most deeply attached to, the one that refused to go away. Written during a six-month period soon after I had lost my mother but gained a beautiful son. Experiencing first hand a deep sense of grief and yet at the same time the intense love you have for your child – realizing how vulnerable you are as a parent.

The themes in STILL of parental responsibility, loss, youth crime, alcoholism and how men deal with failure all seem as pertinent now as they were when I first wrote it. I cannot imagine anything worse than to lose a child, nailed to a future without end. It is that element that tips STILL into the horror genre.

Although a chilling story, my aim has been to tell it in an atmospheric and lyrical way, taking the audience on a dark emotional journey.

STILL is very much a "London" film and in particular the area around Kings Cross and Old Street where all the main action takes place. London is both the villain and the hero of the film. The mix of the old battling it out for space with the new an apt backdrop for the action. Brooding old Victorian oil refineries overlooking the Eurostar terminal. The small streets and alleyways where Dickens own feral kids ran amok, only fifteen years ago were the venue for prostitutes and dealers but now house coffee shops and chill out bars.



DIRECTOR'S INTERVIEW

What is the essence of the story?

The essence of the story is men and boys, fathers and sons. The way in which in current society men to some extent never have to grow up. You can still be a hip rock star in your fifties. Tom and Ed's behaviour is often like that of teenage boys. I think Aidan's performance brilliantly echoes the likes of John Lydon and Bobby Gillespie in his rebellious nature and desire to live on the edge, that flirtation with confrontation and danger. It is on the one part childish and self-indulgent and the other strangely romantic, he is still searching, striving to do something special. He is not a bad man. He is somebody struggling desperately to come to terms with where his life is at. I think there is a bit of Tom in many men and the film works as a warning, a kind of "there by the grace of God go I". I was also keen to tell an adult story about people in the mid-term of their lives, when things can become messy, dreams downsized, the baggage of relationships, regret and missed opportunities.

How did you approach the sound and score for STILL?

I was keen to avoid the generic signature for modern urban films, which tends to be electronic and find something that was a warmer textural soundscape. I see STILL as modern noir and there are clear echoes of TAXI DRIVER in scenes but primarily in the soundtrack, both Alex Gray (The composer) and I are big fans of the Bernard Herrmann score. We were also influenced by the soundtracks of the Jazz greats in the fifties, Miles Davis "Lift to a Scaffold", Duke Ellington's "Anatomy of a Murder", the scores of Gil Evans. But we also wanted to give it a modern twist as if a typically noir jazz score was produced by somebody like Burial, so it became murkier and more dense a modern counterpart to those soundtracks. From the very beginning I wanted to use two LOW tracks to bookend the film, in particular "Closer" as the track that would accompany the final shot of the film, a moment of stillness and contemplation after all the madness that precedes it, the beautifully haunting lyrics only adding to the sense of tragedy. STILL is an unashamedly sad film and LOW's music for me captures a real sense of ache.

How would you describe your style as a Director when working with cast and crew?

I have worked in different mediums such as theatre, music promos and dance and I see myself primarily as a storyteller. But I also have a strong visual sense of what the film should be and I aim to create an atmosphere where the cast and crew totally buy into that vision and feel inspired by it. I think with a film like STILL the emotional core of the story is the performances and I try to give actors as much freedom as I can so that they don't feel restrained by the technical elements of film-making. We tended to have very long takes, complete scenes, often the choreography of the camera would be dictated once a scene had been walked through. This created a harmony between camera and performance. Equally, although Andy (the DoP) and myself wanted to make a strikingly visual film, we were always keen that the shots would be sympathetic to and serve the narrative.

There is clearly an evolution to STILL's visualisation - what were you aiming to achieve with this?

The original idea was followed through fairly rigorously; we wanted to capture the disintegration of Tom Carver visually. In the first half of the film apart from the very first shot you see, Tom is shot

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from a respectful distance as if given space for his grief to play out but also a sense that he is unreachable. The colour tones are autumnal and crisp. We often see Tom as a reflection, shadow or distorted through a glass, as if we are watching the ghost of a man, the camera fixed or moving very slowly and elegantly. This restrained style gradually deteriorates along with Tom's character. The camera is almost exclusively hand held for the latter part of the narrative and we use a lot of extreme close ups. The colour starts to be pulled of any warmer tones until by the final climatic scene there is hardly any colour at all in Tom's life.

What are your plans for the future?

I would love to make more features and have set up a production company (www.bluntstuff.co.uk) with my producer Colette Delaney Smith to develop a slate of productions along with Zorana Piggott at 011 Productions. I am a huge fan of the Coen brothers and would love to produce a body of work as diverse and eclectic as theirs; films that fall through the cracks of genre. We are currently working on 3 projects, COUNTRY DARKNESS a horror film inspired by the style of the new wave of Korean Films. POP a quirky comedy about celebrity, echoing films like Harold & Maude and Rushmore in terms of storytelling. Finally an unashamedly art house film set exclusively in a hotel which will hopefully be a cross between Lars Von Triers "The Element Of Crime" and Copolla's "One From The Heart" but on a significantly smaller budget than the latter. At present I am writing a new draft of a stage play "Suzanne Beware of the Devil" about religion and homophobia.