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A MAGNET RELEASE

AMULET

A film by Romola Garai
99 minutes

Official Selection:
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FINAL PRESS NOTES

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SYNOPSIS

Amulet, written and directed by Romola Garai, explores the story of Tomaz, an ex soldier from an unnamed foreign conflict, living in strained circumstances in London. Haunted by his past, he is offered a place to stay in a decaying, claustrophobic house, inhabited by an enigmatic young woman and her dying mother. As he starts to fall for his new companion, Tomaz cannot ignore his suspicion that something insidious might also be living alongside them.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT – ROMOLA GARAI

About 3 years ago I read a book about international efforts to prosecute rape as a weapon of war. In this book there was a lot of discussion of how the perpetrators mentally 're-categorize' the rapes that occur in war after the event. Allowing them to return to 'normal' civilian life and apparently normal relationships. I was inspired to write about a character who categorizes himself entirely as a protector and cannot see himself as an aggressor; and how the 'ideal' male protagonist 'hero' role as protector and savior has been used by men in fiction and film to disguise the reality of relations between men and women.

At the time of reading this book I was playing around with ideas of how to make a contained horror. After my short film (which was a drama), I'd written a number of scripts that could be categorized as drama in a similar vein but kept getting drawn back to macabre forms such as horror, noir and ghost stories etc. I think because I wanted to talk about some quite elemental ideas about the persecution of women and I wanted the audience to be physically sharing the extreme emotions that persecution engenders in women, it seemed better to describe these in these more 'extreme' or visceral forms. I wrote the script very much influenced by the spate of recent brilliant contained horrors such as Jennifer Kent's *The Babadook*, Babak Anvari's *Under the Shadow* and how those films use the genre to talk about repressed pain and grief. But stylistically I was probably more influenced by the English 'school' of the brilliant Ben Wheatley's *Kill List* and *A Field In England* and especially by Peter Strickland's *Katalyn Varga* and *The Duke of Burgandy*. These two filmmakers, whose first films came out just as I started writing in earnest, were probably the biggest influence on the script at the writing and imagining stage.

When I was writing the script I really wanted to take the audience on a journey of questioning the protagonist and his motives. From Tomaz as a figure deserving of our pity and Magda as a helpless victim of her mother (an older woman- of course the pariah) to a place where we start to understand that Tomaz is living alongside an evil that he believes he can escape and make his own retribution for: that he can decide his own punishment. It was important too that he was a man of high education, stable and loving home life and moral compass: that his act comes as a result of opportunity to do it and opportunity to hide it; not innate evil. Also I was excited to play with gender roles in the film in other ways. How the mother being an old woman automatically makes her evil in this genre. That Magda professes herself entirely not in need of protection and yet we don't question Tomaz enforcing himself on her. And it was always my intention to allow the film an element of 'slyness'. A sort of dark humor in its more extreme moments and the Sister Claire role really encapsulates that.

When I started to work alongside DP Laura Bellingham and Designer Francesca Massariol then the visual language of the film was really explored around this idea of the film having three separate and unique identities. The London modern day exteriors needed the realistic look and feel of a contemporary drama, the flashbacks had to have a sense of foreboding fairy tale and the modern day sections in Magda's house (which make up the bulk of the film) we wanted to have the air of a classic horror in the style of *Trouble Every Day* or Kusurski's *Possession* which (because of its very unusual genre placement and because its very much grounded in gender war) became our touchstone reference. We explored the possibility of shooting some sections in the forest in 16mm but as we knew we were going to be shooting in Dartmoor in December and shooting conditions were very challenging we shot the whole film on digital but with Cooke lenses with added filtration for the London house interiors and Zeiss lenses with low filtration for the forest and played a lot with the grain in the grade to give it the feel of a classic horror in the places we needed. We also had two cameras with the second camera focusing exclusively on GV's and details to increase the sense of place in each of the three locations.

Laura and I also always tried to find alternative angles in the Magda house interiors to give a sense of unsettling, paranoid feelings; i.e. high wide's of rooms or extremely low angles on faces. We also played with theatrical slides and pans to give the audience the sense of an unconscious 'impassive' observer to the protagonists' moral degeneration. Although we very much wanted a set for the house to enable us to create very structured shots and unusual angles on the empty spaces of the house budget restrictions meant it became clear that the attic was the only place we would be able to build as a set and even that set we couldn't fly out walls. Luckily we found a Victorian house which had exactly right level of dereliction and the original fixtures so when Francesca started to paint and distress the walls she had the best canvas to work from. We spoke a lot about mirrors and the sense of Tomaz being watched and observed, and the space having the feel of being no where particular geographically. The cast all coming from different places and the house having no identifying geographical identity was part of a deliberate intent to make the film feel like it has no particular place; it could be anywhere. I wanted to use a lot of yellow in the house and we ended up with a palette of faded yellows and browns that enhanced the sense of the film having a classic horror element to it in these scenes so the sense of time period as well as place feels quite fluid in the film.

I also knew from the outset that I wanted a strong element of old fashioned or classic SFX rather than an over reliance on VFX. When we started to design the creatures, especially the bat rat it became clear however that a single puppeteer would be unable to operate wings as well the body and feet so the Bat/rat does have VFX wings but the creature is designed and built by SFX as is the body of the Magda/Goddess. Although she is sitting in a VFX 'shell landscape' the actress was wearing the suit as I wanted the film to have the tangible, physical sense of puppetry and suits the actors where working within rather than green screen which can be emotionally distancing for an audience. The

influences for the Magda Goddess were a lot of ancient figurines such as the 'Lion Man' and the performance art of Olivier de Sagazan. I'm a huge fan of David Cronenberg's early films and I very much wanted to emulate the sense of the SFX from *The Brood* or *Shivers* in the work that we presented. These physical effects have always produced a much stronger emotion in me and because birth is an important element of the film I wanted the effects to be ones the actors could interact with.

The idea of the film having different identities continued into the sound, music and editing process and all three of these elements contributed to the sense of the film having a dreamy and otherworldly aesthetic. Unusually for a film which has strong horror elements we wanted to play with a bending or warping sense of reality so rather than us always setting up an absolute 'truth' we wanted to explore Tomaz sensory landscape with editing that uncoupled the sound or dialogue from the picture at points and so the film hopefully feels quite visceral. The composition is the first film score by contemporary composer Sarah Angliss who I was excited to work with as she works a lot with voice and I knew I wanted female voice in the score as a sort of tribal or elemental pre-historic calling. We listened to a lot of Norwegian 'Kulning' and also played with unusual instruments such as the hurdy-gurdy and the contra-bass recorder to give the sense of the film having an ancient quality to it.

I was incredibly lucky to have had my first choice cast and to have been gifted with such incredible actors who had such passion for the subject matter and sensitivity to their characters. 'Tomaz' is not an easy part to play. The actor has to protect and mask a real darkness whilst making no excuses in the performance for his underlying violence. Alec was able to exactly characterise the apparent innocence and goodness of his character whilst also having the courage to really embrace his brutality at the end. Likewise Carla really embraced the opportunity to play a character who reveals herself gradually over time. Her emotional range is truly extraordinary and we were lucky to have such a gifted actor who could commit so totally to the emotional core of the story.

Finally we were incredibly fortunate to have the extraordinary talents of Imelda Staunton to finish our cast. Her extraordinary brilliant skill brought real intelligence and humor to the role of Sister Clair and it was a pleasure to direct someone who took such joy in the role.

- Romola Garai

THE HOUSE

An iconic marker of horror is the haunted house, which is the beating heart of *Amulet*. So finding a location in the middle of London that would exactly suit the eerie, decaying ambience of what Garai had in mind was always going to be a challenge. Producer Matt Wilkinson believes that “the house is 100% the most important thing, above the script and cast, getting the house right, that’s the environment, that’s 70% of the film,” and remembers the difficulty of ‘casting’ the perfect house. “We had an absolute nightmare with it. We had a different house lined up and then we got gazumped at a really crucial juncture, two weeks before the start of prep. We finally managed to source this house which had been owned by an 80 year old woman who’d died on the premises and the interior hadn’t changed since the 60s.”

Thankfully the new owners were absolutely on board with a film crew taking over and using the house as a blank canvas, which meant that Garai’s visions could be easily realized, thanks to a close working relationship with production designer, Francesca Massariol. In the script, Garai wrote extensive, specific descriptors about the design she had in mind for the house and in a moment of serendipity, had images on a mood board that were the exact same images that Massariol had also pulled up for her own board. “I would turn up on set and think, wow, that really is the house, it’s like she’s lifted the ideas straight from my head and made them real,” says Garai.

Wilkinson breaks down the different spaces that the characters encounter in *Amulet*. “We wanted three very distinct worlds, the forest was very saturated and lush and that was to make you feel at home in that space, essentially another way of making the revelation of what’s happened there even more shocking. The house was supposed to be more somber and womb-like and then the blues of the real world were in contrast to that, giving three very different flavors, lulling you into a false sense of security.”

Of course, from the actors’ perspective, getting the setting right was crucial to their roles in the film. Staunton says, “I was especially impressed with how the low budget stretched people’s imagination and talents. Everyone wants to make this work, the art department went in with all guns blazing and it made all of us think outside the box. The house is so perfect, it seems to have landed in the middle of this street for this film!” Juri agrees, commenting, “We have the whole house and it feels very real, as though they found it that way (although they probably didn’t), and that all helps massively in terms of getting into character. Even in the garden, there were poisonous plants, which we had to avoid, which somehow fits in with the mood of the film.”

Secareanu adds, “It was so important to have a real house to film in because it had a vibe of its own. The house is such a big character in the story and it really helped us to bring authenticity to the story. Being in the house rather than on set felt much more organic.”

THE CAST

As with the house, there was definitely a ‘meant to be’ element to the casting, which delighted Wilkinson. “The first person we went to for each role was the person who said yes to it - it was the shortest casting period that I’ve ever been a part of!” With such a small cast, the filmmakers knew they had to be incredibly specific about what they wanted. Garai knew from the start that she didn’t want the lead actors to put on accents, Wilkinson recalls. “Romola felt strongly that authentic was the way to go, so along with the casting director, Anna Kennedy, we looked for people who could bring that semi-exoticness to the role. I was a big fan of Alec from *God’s Own Country* and he happened to be in London doing a play so we went en masse to see it and met him afterwards.” Garai agrees, adding, “Alec was amazing in that film so as soon as he was suggested, I thought, it has to be him, he’s exactly right. He’s very sympathetic on screen, which is so important for this film,” and Wilkinson continues, “Tomaz is a really difficult role because you’ve got to love him and you’ve got to root for him, but he’s also got to be capable of being revealed as something more sinister. And what you learn about Alec very quickly is that he’s got an imposing physicality, but he’s also got puppy dog eyes and you definitely get lovable... but you can believe sinister.”

Secareanu confesses that Tomaz’s appeal was instantaneous. “When I first read the script, I couldn’t put it down. The character of Tomaz really intrigued me because the story drip-feeds information about him. He’s an ex-soldier, you don’t know his nationality, he’s enigmatic. You get the feeling that he’s punishing himself for something that he’s done but for a long time, you don’t know why. He’s a man that’s isolated himself and he’s struggling with the idea of whether he’s allowed to forgive himself for this enormous wrong that he’s committed, that’s what I liked about the story, this inner battle of morality.”

For the role of Magda, Garai had seen Carla Juri first in *Wetlands* and then *Blade Runner 2049* a few years later. “I thought her scenes were the best part of that film and I really remembered her from it, she stuck in my mind so I thought she would be perfect for Magda.” As Wilkinson points out, “for Magda, you’re asking for someone to appear ‘of this world’ but there are essentially non-humans entities within it too, so getting someone like Carla, a mercurial, ethereal actress who feels quite ‘other-worldly’ to begin with, just plays into that, it makes her feel romantic and dreamy but actually that’s what makes you buy into the twist at the end.”

For Juri, getting into the character of Magda was all about reading the script from a different angle. “Nothing is as it seems. For Magda, she has a plan, a trap for Tomaz to fall into even though she gives him chances not to fall for them. Sometimes the chances are quite hidden, sometimes they’re very obvious but he still doesn’t take that chance to escape, which says something about him. I didn’t understand all of the story right away but I liked it, I knew I could identify with it, it was clever. It was good to have time to discover it because when you break it down, I realized I could play it in many different ways.”

In terms of getting the legendary Imelda Staunton on board, she was exactly who Garai had in mind when writing the part of Sister Claire. When Garai went to the casting team, she says “I told them I wanted an Imelda Staunton type, I thought they’d find an actress who would be inspired *by* her. So actually it’s been really weird having her do it, it’s like I dreamt it, because I’ve already seen it all in my mind with her in the role. The first day on set, I almost couldn’t really direct because I was watching her do something that I’d written for her, it was very strange and surreal!”

From a producer’s point of view, Wilkinson adds, “we felt the project overall needed the injection of someone a bit more recognizable and Romola and Imelda had worked together before so it was the perfect fit. This doesn’t feel like something Imelda has done before, and that seemed enough for her to want to do it. We thought that she’d have a lot of fun, playing an insane, mischievous nun, and she did, so that worked well!”

Garai continues, “Compared to the play we worked on together over a decade ago, working with Imelda now in another capacity is completely different. As actors, you collaborate but it’s always through a third person, the director usually manages your entire relationship. When you’re directing, it’s closer, there’s no buffer. What you realize when you work with someone like Imelda is that she doesn’t reject anything, she can do everything, nothing is threatening. So I’ll ask her to try this or that and she just says, ‘sure’.”

Staunton builds on the idea that this was an unusual role for her to take on. “I always try to look for different types of roles but no-one’s really asked me to do a horror before. How many middle-aged women get to drive a horror film? For me, the only ‘not very nice’ person that I’ve played was as Dolores Umbridge in Harry Potter and that wasn’t horror, that was a very quiet danger. As actors, we want to play something that hopefully we are not, and villains are particularly interesting because we’re looking at someone who might have a psychological problem, or someone who could be evil and doesn’t know they’re evil, there’s a lot of layers there to explore, which is great for an actor, to find the truth of why these things happen.”

ROMOLA AS AN ACTOR TURNED WRITER-DIRECTOR

Garai has entertained us for years on screen but knew after writing and directing short film, *Scrubber*, that she wanted to take creative control of a feature film. She wrote *Amulet* in the spring of 2016, having been advised that a low budget horror film would be easier to realize on the big screen than other genres. She acknowledges, “from my experience as an actor, I prefer working with directors who aren’t writer-directors because they’re much better at interrogating scripts that they’ve been given, because it’s another stage in the process, they’re more objective, so I’m trying to be as collaborative as possible because writer-directors can become very excluding of other people’s visions.”

For Wilkinson, Garai’s script had an immediate impact. “I read it and it was bonkers! It was rough and raw but confident, it was very different in its intent to other things I’d been reading and I felt it could be a very effective horror film. So I met Romola and realized she knew exactly what she wanted to say with this film. I was also excited that she’d been on enough sets as an actor to know that side of it as well because the amount of time she’s been watching other directors and absorbing, whether knowingly or not, means that she knows how to deal with actors. Every actor is different and you have to find a way to communicate with them that gives them a confidence, so she has an innate empathy with what it is to give actors time and space to build up that trust.”

Staunton remembers reading the script for the first time. “It surprised me that it was a horror film. I thought it was going to be a right-on women’s issues film - which it sort of is - but it’s wrapped up in the package of horror, which I thought was fantastic because you don’t get as many women writing and directing horror films.” Working with an actor-turned-director was a very positive experience for all the actors, with Staunton pointing out, “They obviously understand a lot more of what an actor goes through and how you approach your work, so having been an actor makes it so much easier than just being a director.”

Garai admits, “A lot of the film is very technical, a lot of genre films, particularly horror are highly constructed films, made very much with the cinematography at the forefront. In a drama, you might allow the actors to really play within a space as they could if they’re on stage. You absolutely can’t do that with a horror film, everything is about specific, constructed shots, which the actors have to step into and do certain things to make it work. It becomes quite a technical exercise so I’m very relieved to hear that Imelda thinks that I’m able to bring some creativity to it for the actors!”

For Secareanu, *Amulet* wasn’t his first time working with an actor-director, having previously collaborated with actor turned writer-director Francis Lee on *God’s Own Country* and he agrees with Staunton that being an actor herself, Garai understood what the other actors needed to go through the filmmaking process. “Romola was really helpful on set, making sure we knew where we were all on the same page in terms of where we were in the story. Because we didn’t shoot chronologically and there was so many layers which were slowly revealed, she helped us keep track of what to keep hidden

or not. Some days were really hard because we had to go through some really emotional scenes and states but Romola's obvious experience of being on set herself as an actor made the whole experience much more comfortable".

Wilkinson especially thrives on the challenges that come from working with first time directors. "They're who I've mostly worked with and it's part of the fun of launching new talent and spotting the potential in someone, seeing how we can help realize that. In terms of timing it's great to have a female writer-director getting an opportunity to do a first feature because we've spent the last two years talking about how there isn't proper representation in the film industry. The other side of working with a first timer is that during prep and production, there's certainly a much closer relationship with the producer and director because they're asking, what's normal, what's the expectation here, how does this work, etc. As a producer, that's quite involving, you build up a trusting relationship and it gives you quite an intense one to one."

Having Damian Jones as executive producer, someone who has produced many successful British films such as *The Iron Lady*, *The History Boys*, *Belle* and *The Lady in the Van*, was a huge coup for *Amulet*. Wilkinson points out that it was a win-win situation for all involved. "Damian and I have known each other since we were colleagues at Working Title, he was one of the first people to give me advice as a producer. Even though he was off making much bigger films, I knew he had an appetite to help and give advice on smaller projects. I just thought on something like this, it's a chance for him to be involved in something cool and different and I think for everyone else, it would give the film another validation so that people knew and understood that this was real - it felt like another seal of approval when he came on board."

For Jones the appeal had been there immediately "I'd always wanted to do a psychological horror and when Matt asked me to read and then meet Romola I knew this was the one. Her eloquent haunting and harrowing vision for the film was so impressive and powerful, showing all the potential from her short film, and now she's more than delivered on that".

A FEMINIST HORROR

For Juri, it was the content of the script which had a particular impact. "Not only is Romola a great writer of dialogue but she has so many themes in the story. Initially it's a comment on victimization, which is huge in itself, but also on religion and who religion was created for. Usually a man, so then what is the woman's role? It's about how self-serving religion can be but there's also a great deal of pain and fear and anger and abuse. When you first meet Magda, she's scared and sad, she's almost stereotype of how a male dominated society views women. We were servants, the male was the patriarch so it's a comment on how ridiculous is it that Magda does all these things for Tomaz."

Secareanu takes away something else from the film too, “It’s a feminist horror about forgiveness and we should all ask ourselves, whether forgiveness is ours to give or if we should take it from someone else. It’s the moral issue that emerges from this film. That’s what I love about it!”

Garai says, “I wanted to write a horror film where the protagonists switch roles, so you understand that the man is coming into a place to rescue a young, innocent woman from an older woman, who is (as is always the case in these sorts of films) the source of the evil. I wanted to introduce all of those recognizable conventions and then switch them around, so Tomaz ends up becoming the source of the evil, Magda ends up becoming the rescuer and the older woman in the attic becomes a former victim. Also, if you look at a lot of horror films, there is the question of ‘are we deriving a voyeuristic pleasure from this because it’s about women being hunted or attacked?’ So I wanted a male protagonist because I enjoy seeing a man on film be very afraid a lot of the time - you don’t see that very often. You see them having to fight things but just to see them just be scared is very entertaining!”

Wilkinson adds to this by saying, “There are certain tropes around horror, certain expectations in terms of the victim and the savior and Romola takes the audience’s comfort and complicity with that and turns it on its head, messing with convention. I think horror is always a response to societal conflict so whatever the topic is, film and horror especially, finds a way to hold a mirror up to that. So part of the subtext of *Amulet* might be around the shift in gender roles that have come up in recent years as more women join the conversation about being marginalized or abused. Women rising up, women having a voice, women taking control, as per the themes in our film, obviously feels like a reflection of current changes in society.” Wilkinson also raises the point that the theme of women having a voice was not just reflected on screen but behind the camera too. “Romola decided very early on that she wanted this to be female led from all aspects, not just creatively, so 70% of this crew was female and every HOD, apart from the editor, was also female - the production went out of its way to embrace as many new female talents in crucial roles as possible.”

ABOUT THE CAST

Alec Secareanu – Tomaz

Alec Secareanu is a well-known Romanian actor. After graduating from the Drama School in Bucharest in 2007 he appeared in a number of theatre plays and short movies, made his debut in television in the same year and was casted in his first lead role in a Romanian feature film four years later. His debut outside Romania was in the award-winning British independent film “God’s own country” in 2017 and gained international accolades for his interpretation of Gheorghe (BIFA nomination for best lead actor in 2017). After this role his international career arose by playing theatre at the Royal Court and later that year in TV starring in roles in “Baptiste” (2018/BBC One), “Doing Money” (2018/BBC One), and “Strike Back” (2020 /Lefbank/Cinemax) as well in film where he is headlining Golden Globe-nominated actress [Romola Garai](#)’s ([The Hour](#)) directorial debut [Amulet](#) alongside [Carla Juri](#) ([Blade Runner 2049](#)) and Oscar nominee [Imelda Staunton](#) (Vera Drake) or the directing debut of [Matt Chambers](#) [The Bike Thief](#) from UK producers [Ellipsis Pictures](#) and [Ugly Duckling Films](#). His latest appearance will be in [Ammonite](#), a film from the director of 2017 UK breakout [God’s Own Country](#), and also with a screenplay written by Francis Lee, starring Kate Winslet and Saoirse Ronan and produced by The See-Saw Films Iain Canning and Emile Sherman ([Widows](#), [Lion](#), [The King’s Speech](#)) alongside Fodhla Cronin O’Reilly ([Lady Macbeth](#)).

Carla Juri – Magda

Carla’s international star has risen since starring in the critically acclaimed German film [Wetlands](#) directed by David Wnendt. Carla was recently seen in Denis Villeneuve’s [Blade Runner 2049](#), opposite Ryan Gosling and Harrison Ford and will soon be seen in the title role in the film [Dear Agnes](#) for director Daniel Alfredson. Her other films include [Walking To Paris](#) for director Peter Greenway, the Sundance hit [Morris From America](#) for director Chad Hartigan in which she starred opposite Craig Robinson and [Brimstone](#) for Dutch filmmaker Martin Koolhoven, opposite Dakota Fanning, Kit Harrington and Guy Pearce, which premiered at the 2016 Venice Film Festival. She was also cast in the title role in [Paula](#), the biopic of renowned German artist Paula Modersohn Becker. Carla recently completed back to back features; [Six Minutes to Midnight](#) opposite Judi Dench and Eddie Izzard and [When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit](#) for Academy Award winning director Caroline Link.

Imelda Staunton – Sister Claire

Imelda Staunton is a celebrated English stage and screen actress. Having trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, she appeared in a vast number of high-profile plays and musicals in London, including “The Wizard of Oz,” “Uncle Vanya,” “Into the Woods,” “Guys and Dolls,” “Entertainment Mr Sloane” and “Good People.” In 2015, Staunton starred as Rose in Jonathan Kent’s revival of “Gypsy,” opening to rave reviews and for which she won the Olivier Award for best actress in a musical. In 2017, Staunton appeared as Martha in “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf” at the Harold Pinter Theatre

and as Sally in “Follies” at the Royal National Theatre. In total for her theatre work, Staunton has earned 11 Olivier nominations, winning four.

Her career on the big screen has also been extensive and successful. She appeared in Kenneth Branagh’s “Much Ado About Nothing,” Ang Lee’s “Sense and Sensibility,” John Madden’s “Shakespeare in Love,” Mike Leigh’s “Vera Drake,” Kirk Jones’ “Nanny McPhee,” Matthew Warchus’ “Pride,” as well as David Yates’ “Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix” and “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1,” again directed by David Yates, and playing the terrifying role of Professor Dolores Jane Umbridge.

Staunton lent her voice to the characters of Margaret Claus in Sarah Smith’s “Arthur Christmas,” Queen Victoria in Peter Lord’s “The Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists!,” a role which won her a nomination for an Annie Award for voice acting, and Aunt Lucy in the first instalment of “Paddington,” directed by Paul King.

Her on screen work has also received much acclaim. For her role as Vera Drake, Staunton won a BAFTA Award for best actress in a leading role, a British Independent Film Award for best actress and an Evening Standard British Film Award for best actress, to name just a few. She also received Academy Award® and Golden Globe® nominations. Her second BAFTA nomination, this time for best actress in a supporting role, came for her role as Hefina Headon in the critically-acclaimed “Pride,” which won her a British Independent Film Award.

Staunton is also well known to television audiences. She appeared in “The Singing Detective,” “Midsomer Murders” and the comedy drama series “Is It Legal?,” which aired on ITV and Channel 4 from 1995 to 1998. In 1995, she starred in the HBO movie “Citizen X,” and in 2007 she appeared in the five part BBC series “Cranford.” More recently, in 2012, she portrayed Alma Reville, wife of Alfred Hitchcock, in the HBO television film “The Girl,” opposite Toby Jones and Sienna Miller. This role won her BAFTA and Primetime Emmy Award® nominations.

In 2017, Staunton played Sandra in “Finding Your Feet,” directed by Richard Loncraine, and she returned to voice the character of Aunt Lucy in “Paddington 2,” directed once again by Paul King. She has most recently been seen as Lady Bagshaw in the film “Downton Abbey,” the continuing story of the Crawley family.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Romola Garai – Writer and Director

Multi award nominated actor Romola Garai's extensive film, TV and stage credits include work with some of the worlds finest writers and directors including Sarah Gavron's , *Suffragette*, Joe Wright's *Atonement* Francois Ozon's *Angel*, Lone Scherfig's *One Day* and Stephen Poliakoff's *Glorious 39*. She also has an extensive list of TV credits including playing the lead in Marc Munden's TV mini series *The Crimson Petal* *abc the White*. On stage she has played major roles in plays for the Royal Court (*The Village Bike*), *the Young Vic (Measure for Measure)*, *the Almeida (The Writer)* and *the RSC. (Queen ANNE and Lear/The Seagull)*.

As well as her extensive performing credits, Romola is also known for her writing/directing work including Sundance Best Short Film nominated *Scrubber*. She has a Feature film in development with UK top production company The Bureau and a number of TV projects. *Amulet* is her feature film debut.

Maggie Monteith – Producer

Maggie first started her career in film working across the media and marketing of Warner Bros Films in the UK and Europe while working at Grey Entertainment and Media. Moving to Columbia TriStar UK and Ireland, she oversaw the marketing for films such as *Men In Black*, *Mask Of Zorro*, *Godzilla*, and her personal favorite, *Matilda*.

Promoted to work at Columbia TriStar in US Domestic, she moved to California, and enjoyed working on films such as *Charlie's Angels*, *Spider-man* and *Stuart Little*. Her studio-marketing career culminated in working for Lucasfilm on marketing, promotions, media and publicity worldwide for Episode II of *Star Wars*.

Over the next few years Maggie worked in the start-up of Participant Media, and as a consultant to banks and hedge funds for Gerson Lehrman. It was at this time that she decided to move into film financing.

Since 2009 Maggie has been part of the financing for numerous feature films as a Producer, including *13*, *The Experiment*, *Brotherhood*, *Kaleidoscope*, *Double Date*, *3 Way Junction* and *Pin Cushion*. 2017 saw the production of a number of feature films which include; *10x10* starring Luke Evans and Kelly Reilly, *Alright Now* featuring Cobie Smulders and Jessica Hynes, *A Guide To Second Date Sex* written and directed by exciting British talent Rachel Hiron, Carol Morley's *Out Of Blue* a New Orleans-set crime drama featuring an all star cast helmed by Patricia Clarkson, Dolly Well's Brooklyn set directorial debut *Good Posture* starring Emily Mortimer and Grace Van Patten and *Pink Wall*, 'Weekend' star Tom Cullen's directorial debut featuring Tatiana Maslany and Jay Duplass.

Maggie was also delighted to continue her relationship with Met Films as their co-production, *23 Walks* starring Dave Johns and Alison Steadman, began the first of a two leg shoot which finished in the spring this year. 2019 has seen Tom Cullen's *Pink Wall* and Dolly Well's *Good Posture* debut with their world premieres at SXSW and Tribeca Film Festival respectively.

In addition, Maggie has been part of the financing and production of four documentaries under her Documentary Company banner, including the Oscar winning *Searching For Sugarman*, *The Green Prince* and the *Lovers And The Despot* and Ferrari documentary, *Race To Immortality*.

Matt Wilkinson – Producer

Film and TV Production Company, Stigma Films was set up in 2011. Producer Matthew James Wilkinson was previously a Development Executive at Working Title Films, where he worked on the script development of a number of high-profile features.

Stigma's first production was the BFI-funded suburban thriller, *SLR*. The film was nominated for an IFTA (Irish BAFTA) and short-listed for the Oscars.

In 2012, the company signed a 1st look deal with Pathe UK to develop high concept genre features for an international audience. Their first feature was sci-fi actioner, *THE CALL UP*.

Matthew recently completed work on, *YESTERDAY*, for Working Title Films/Universal. The film was released on June 28th this year and went straight in at number 2 in the UK box office taking £2.2 million over the opening weekend.

Matt is currently in post-production on actress Romola Garai's feature debut, *OUTSIDE*, starring Carla Juri, Alec Secareanu and Imelda Staunton. Exec produced by Damian Jones.

Simon Bird's feature debut, *DAYS OF THE BAGNOLD SUMMER*, starring Monica Dolan, Earl Cave, Rob Brydon, Alice Lowe and Tim Key will have its World premiere later this year. Altitude Distribution has bought UK rights to the film and will release in 2020.

Previous titles include, contained thriller, *KALEIDOSCOPE*, starring Toby Jones and Anne Reid, which launched at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 2017, winning Anne Reid the 'Best Actress Award'. The film played as part of FilmFour's 'FearFear' genre festival and will air on Film4 this October. IFC Midnight released in the US.

Comedy/horror, *DOUBLE DATE*, starring Michael Socha and Georgia Groome also premiered at the Edinburgh Film Festival, and went on to play FrightFest UK, winning Writer/Actor Danny Morgan the 'Genre Rising Star Award'. It took top prize at Strasbourg, and was released across 65 Cineworld cinemas in the UK & Ireland.

Stigma produced, FLOOR 9.5, a horror/chiller for Fox/Ryan Murphy (exec), which aired on US TV to great acclaim as part of the Mars/Skittle 'Halloween' season of shorts. It also screened ahead of Peter Strickland's IN FABRIC at last year's Fantastic Fest.

ERNESTINE&KIT, written and directed by actor Simon Bird (THE INBETWEENERS), was part-funded by Creative England and premiered at SXSW Film Festival in Austin, Texas. It was also nominated for an ITFA.

Stigma are in pre-production on the BFI-backed ghost story-horror, THE POWER, with writer/director Corinna Faith and are finalizing cast on Sci-Fi thriller, GATEWAY 6, with Olga Kurylenko.

Damian Jones – Executive Producer

DAMIAN JONES is one of Britain's most prolific film producers. His career spans over forty feature films that include top directing and acting talent to critical and commercial success. His films include the Oscar®-winning THE IRON LADY (Phyllida Lloyd), THE LADY IN THE VAN and THE HISTORY BOYS (Nicholas Hytner), BELLE (Amma Asante), WELCOME TO SARAJEVO (Michael Winterbottom), ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS THE MOVIE (Mandie Fletcher), MILLIONS (Danny Boyle), GOODBYE CHRISTOPHER ROBIN (Simon Curtis), SEX & DRUGS & ROCK & ROLL (Mat Whitecross), DAD'S ARMY (Oliver Parker), ADULTHOOD and BROTHERHOOD (Noel Clarke), POWDER ROOM (M.J. Delaney), SPLENDOR (Gregg Araki) FAST GIRLS (Regan Hall), and GRIDLOCK'D (Vondie Curtis Hall).

Jones' other current projects include Michael Winterbottom's GREED and Argyris Papadimitropoulos's MONDAY, he also has upcoming films with Alice Lowe, John Morton, Tim Firth, Björn Runge and Sophia Al Maria. He has a first Look deal with Fox Searchlight with projects that include SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY, a reimagining of the original film with writer/director Nia DaCosta; ONE MAN, TWO GUVNORS with Oli Refson, Richard Bean, and Nicholas Hytner executive producing; PRESIDENT'S ASTROLOGER with Samantha Strauss and John Madden, the story of Joan Quigley, the astrologer to the Reagans – focusing on her relationship with Nancy Reagan; UNTITLED MURDER MYSTERY (working title) by Mark Chappell, and additional projects with Simon Farnaby and Roisin Conaty.

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Laura Bellingham – Cinematographer

Laura is a cinematographer with a background shooting award-winning shorts and documentaries. Her varied portfolio has taken her around the globe from the Kansas prairies to the uninhabitable Exclusion Zone of Chernobyl and screened at many international film festivals including Berlin, BFI London, SXSW and Los Angeles. Her first feature Double Date went on nationwide release in 2017 and she has recently wrapped on her second feature ZERO, a dystopian chase thriller for the BFI and BBC films. Since then she has gone onto shoot a further BFI feature, a currently untitled supernatural horror for BAFTA nominated director Corinna Faith, which sees Rose

Williams as a young nurse forced to work the night shift during the power cuts of 1973. Prior to her training at the prestigious National Film and Television School, Laura studied English Literature. As a Literature graduate as well as a cinematography graduate, Laura has a passion for narrative driven imagery and sees storytelling as an opportunity to broaden our emotional experience of the world as well as our understanding of each other.

Francesca Massariol – Production Designer

Italian born and bred, London based Francesca Massariol graduated at the Venice Academy of Fine Arts in Architecture for Theatre Design and just two years after, she received her BA: Design for Performance at The Central Saint Martins College in 2007. Her debut film as Production Designer, *Spaceship* by award-winning writer-director Alex Taylor, funded by the BFI, had its world premiere at SXSW in 2016. In the same year *Balcony*, her BIFA nominated short film directed by Toby Fell-Holden collected an array of awards including the 66 Berlinale Crystal Bear and The London Calling Plus award. In 2017 *Pin Cushion*, written and directed by Deborah Haywood, had its world premiere at the 32. Venice Film Festival opening The International Film Critics' Week 2017. In 2017 she designed *Zero* by Faye Gilbert and *Trendy* by Louis Lagayette (Raindance 2018).^[1]_[SEP]In 2018 she Art Directed *Monsoon*, Hong Khaou's second film, and *Little Joe*, by Jessica Hausner, which had its premiere in competition at Cannes 2019.

Francesca recently completed *Mughal Mowgli*, by Bassam Tariq, starring Riz Hamed and *The Power*, directed by Corinna Faith and Produced by Matt Wilkinson and Rob Watson. Francesca is a member of the World Building Institute and the Production Designers Collective, a global community of production designers funded by Inbal Weinberg, interested in sharing knowledge and promoting the craft of Production Design.

Alastair Reid – Editor

Born in 1971 Alastair has been working in the industry for over 25 years. He has edited numerous award-winning projects and is known for *The Luminaries* for Working Title Films; *The Cry* for Synchronicity Films; *Black Mirror - The Entire History of You* for Zeppotron; *This Is England '88* for Warp.

CREDITS

CAST:

**CARLA JURI
ALEC SECAREANU
ANGELIKI PAPOULIA
WITH IMELDA STAUNTON**^[1]_[SEP]

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY ROMOLA GARAI

PRODUCED BY MATTHEW JAMES WILKINSON, MAGGIE MONTEITH

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAMIAN JONES, CHRIS REED, PHIL RYMER,
JAMES NORRIE, BOB PORTAL, INDERPAL SINGH, PHIL HUNT,
COMPTON ROSS, REINHARD BESSER, PAT WINTERSGILL,
WALTER MAIR**

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY LAURA BELLINGHAM

EDITOR ALASTAIR REID

PRODUCTION DESIGNER FRANCESCA MASSARIOL

CO-PRODUCER ROBYN FORSYTHE

COMPOSER SARAH ANGLISS

SOUND DESIGNER NICK BALDOCK, C.A.S.

COSTUME DESIGNER HOLLY SMART

MAKE-UP & HAIR DESIGNER SCARLETT O'CONNELL

SPECIAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR CLIFF WALLACE

VFX SUPERVISOR CHRISTIAN LETT

VFX PRODUCER PETER ROGERS

FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ALICE CARONNA

PRODUCTION SOUND MIXER LEE SHARP

CASTING DIRECTOR ANNA KENNEDY