



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
FESTIVAL DE SAN SEBASTIÁN  
2017



A FILM BY MATT PORTERFIELD

# SOLLERS POINT



# CAST & CREW

Keith  
Carol  
Courtney  
Aaron  
Kate  
Marquis  
Ladybug  
Candace  
Gary  
Elaine  
Mom  
Wasp  
Jessie  
Aurora

McCaul Lombardi  
Jim Belushi  
Zazie Beetz  
Tom Guiry  
Martin Ireland  
Brievon Bell-Eli  
Lynn Cohen  
Imani Hakim  
Kazy Tauginas  
Alyssa Bresnahan  
Michael Rogers  
Wass Stevens  
Everleigh Brenner  
Maya Martinez

Writer-director  
Director of photography  
Editor  
Music supervisor  
Sound

Production designer  
Costume designer  
Casting directors

Producers

Co-producers

Executive producers

Matt Porterfield  
Shabier Kirchner  
Marc Vives  
Chris Swanson  
Chris Schneider  
Julien Perez  
Vincent Hazard  
Sara K. White  
Elizabeth Warn  
Jessica Kelly  
Kate Gellar

Eric Bannat  
Alexandra Byer  
Gabrielle Dumon  
Jordan Mintzer  
Ryan Zacarias  
Joslyn Barnes  
Danny Glover  
Madeleine Askwith  
Nancy Dwyer  
Jack Dwyer  
Wally Hall  
Le Tong  
Eric Franklin  
Alexandro Bell



# SYNOPSIS

Released from prison, 24-year-old Keith is serving a period of house arrest at the Baltimore home of his father, Carol. As Keith struggles to pick up pieces from his old life, threats to his stability – ghosts from his past; gang members who want to claim him; his own inner demons – prove hard to avoid.

Sentenced to a period of house arrest after his release from prison, Keith (McCaul Lombardi) is chafing at the confines of his father's home. It doesn't help that dad Carol (Jim Belushi), a former steel worker, can't hide his contempt for the boy who let the family down by going off the rails.

Keith wants to educate and better himself, and has the backing of his loving grandmother (Lynn Cohen) and sister (Marin Ireland). But negative outcomes and encounters – his parole officer refusing him permission to leave the state; gang members making moves to intimidate him – propel him back into old, risky habits. His ex, Courtney (Zazie Beetz) wanting nothing to do with him, he takes to hooking up with stripper Jessie (Everleigh Brenner); but the club where Jessie works is a flashpoint for confrontation with the gang.

Always a drink or a bad decision away from disaster, Keith sways between constructive choices and baser instincts. Seeking help from the philosophical kingpin of the gang that won't leave him alone, he's advised to "walk a lone path". But this might just be the worst possible advice for Keith, since it's the positive influence of other people that points the way to a more focused future.

Which turn Keith will take remains ambiguous right to the very last swerve of this intricate, wise and beautifully performed study of personality, community and place.


# NOTES ON THE FILM

In the first moments of *Sollers Point*, we see Keith making his bed. In metaphorical terms, we go on to see him lie in it... but the precise way in which he forms those hospital corners is itself revealing, telling us straight away that Keith has the habits of someone who's been recently institutionalized. Keith's confinement in his father's home for a post-prison period of house arrest is an uncomfortable situation for both men. When his parole officer denies him permission to leave the state for his niece's birthday party, his frustration is emblematic of the negotiation between freedom and constraint that will define the next phase of his life.

The story of an ex-con struggling to readjust is a classic one, of course: think of *Straight Time* and *Carlito's Way*, *Sherry Baby* and *The Yards*. Yet *Sollers Point* is also sharply contemporary in its evocation of drug dependency, racial and intergenerational tension and failing social structure. Keith and his father can be read as being part of that social stratum whose supposed neglect by moneyed elites and mainstream media is frequently cited as a component in the rise of President Donald Trump. But are Keith's difficulties with life the fault of "society", or founded in his own character?







Just as Keith is alternately courted and rejected by people in his life — friends and enemies, love interests and family members — so we as audience members swing between wishing the best for him and losing patience with his failings. McCaul Lombardi (seen recently in Andrea Arnold's Cannes prizewinner *American Honey*) gives an unerring performance as a young man who embodies both potential and self-sabotage, supported by a cast whose knowing, world-weary work speaks of a deep understanding of and connections to their characters. Beloved comic actor Jim Belushi is a particular revelation in the uncharacteristically downbeat role of Carol.

Those familiar with Matt Porterfield's previous work — *Putty Hill*; *Hamilton*; *I Used to Be Darker* — won't be surprised to learn that he provides no easy answers to Keith's plight. Rather, this sensitive and insightful director foregrounds ambiguity and human frailty, immersing us in a world that offers complexity and contradiction rather than cut-out-and-keep moral messages. Each character, however briefly we glimpse him or her, conveys a vivid and unique personality with a life and a backstory. No less rich is Shabier Kirchner's cinematography, the languid beauty of which lends quiet dignity to the sort of lives that often serve in cinema only as background color or shorthand for moral failure.











# DIRECTOR Q&A

**Q:** This is your fourth feature, and all have been shot in your hometown of Baltimore, Maryland. Could you describe your relationship with the city, and why it continues to inspire you as a setting?

**A:** Despite its relatively small size and the fact I grew up here, Baltimore still contains a lot of mystery and surprise for me. It's really a city of neighborhoods, with very clear distinctions along lines of race and class. So many of these neighborhoods have their own distinct history and character – I think I could spend a lifetime exploring them on film, and only scratch the surface.

**Q:** Where did the story for *SOLLERS POINT* begin, and how did it evolve?

**A:** I was thinking of people I've known adjusting to life after prison, specifically those for whom home detention was a part of their probation or re-entry. The image of a man with an ankle bracelet unable to leave his house really stuck with me.

All of my films deal with the idea of community, and how it relates to place. In this case it required a little more research, because I haven't lived in this particular part of Baltimore. The neighborhoods around Sollers Point are demographically similar to the neighborhood where I grew up, which is depicted in my previous films *Hamilton* and *Putty Hill*, but have their distinctions and

differences too. Sollers Point is actually part of Baltimore County, at a relative remove from the city. It's near the former site of Bethlehem Steel, where my grandfather worked, and home to many steelworkers and their families. Its proximity to the water and maritime tradition are facets of Baltimore life that I hadn't explored in my previous films.

My stories start with an image that might be generic, or even iconic, but evolve through extensive location scouting, which grounds the story and my writing. This phase is typically part of the preproduction process; for me, it happens early, during the script stage. I'm driving around, looking at things, meeting people, casting even, while the writing is still taking place. All of that informs the screenplay. Getting into the location early, intimately, helps me understand what I want to achieve during production.

**Q:** You have a terrific cast, from newcomer McCaul Lombardi in the lead, to an unusual turn by Jim Belushi, and fascinating character actors in small roles. How did it come together?

**A:** I'd cast all my previous films myself – this was my first time working with a professional casting director, Jessica Kelly, who is based in New York. She and her team focused on 10-12 principal and supporting roles, while I and a former student, Abby Harri, cast locally for the other supporting roles.

It was my producer, Alexandra Byer,

who found McCaul Lombardi. He had just come off Andrea Arnold's *American Honey*, and when we learned he was from Baltimore, I set up a meeting at a local diner and we hit it off immediately. As soon as I met him, the search was over.

Jim Belushi came through an agent at ICM who really dug the script. It was a similar thing to Lombardi: we connected right away. Jim really got the role and understood the world of the film. He comes from a working class family in Chicago, has a son close to Keith's age, and is really looking for interesting projects that he connects with. Such a generous actor. I felt the same about Zazie Beetz [Courtney]. And Allyssa Bresnahan [Elaine] is a wonder. I had never heard of her before Jessica sent me her taped audition. I had written that role based on a woman I'd known since I was 13 years old, a friend and neighbor, and I honestly had no idea how I'd cast her – but Allyssa hit it so perfectly.

**Q:** Independent movies about troubled characters often look raw and scratchy. You really go against that here: the film has a classical beauty.

**A:** I can appreciate the grainy, raw aesthetic of certain films that depict a similar milieu, but it's just not my style. I'm interested in clear and economical composition that will allow the environments that the characters inhabit to breathe. I'm good at finding locations, and I want to treat them naturalistically – but all the credit for the design of light and

color goes to my cinematographer, Shabier Kirchner, his gaffer, Cedric Cheung-Lao, and our production designer, Sara K. White. They are attuned to the emotional tenor of the scene in a visual way.

**Q:** Keith's clearly a stuck person, but for reasons that aren't immediately apparent. What's your sense of what his issues are? And is his taste in music significant?

**A:** Keith is really close to my heart. Developing his character was an exercise in studying my own id. I'm Keith, if I'd made other choices. I'm a college dropout, bi-polar, divorced. Nothing ever made sense to me, I had no proper rites-of-passage – I was just lucky to access a good education, and that's because my parents were teachers. If I'd had less access to education, I'd probably be seriously considering the options that Keith is considering. Keith is impulsive, reckless, self-hating above all. How to depict a character who is beloved by all, who still feels no self-worth? That's a challenge – but one I wanted to approach.

The music choices also felt really close to home. At some point, I made the clear choice that Keith listened to metal; that was his music. It seemed the best way to get an audience inside his head, whether they like it there or not.

**Q:** The issue of drug use among ordinary working Americans of many class and age groups seems pervasive, and yet not much discussed. Is it an issue on which



you have strong feelings?

A: I definitely have strong feelings about drugs in my city and its depiction on screen. Drugs, particularly heroin and crack cocaine, affect people from all walks of life. I think it's a disease and it's also an economy. I wanted to depict both aspects, but in a way that did not pass judgment on the users or the dealers. I've had friends who sell drugs, friends who use drugs, and friends who have died from drugs, so it's very important to me that I approach the subject with respect.

Q: What about the gang content? Did you base that on real research? What did you want that interaction to reveal about Keith's options?

A: Anybody who's been in prison has dealt with gangs. I talked with friends who have done time, and others who have spent time with gangs on the streets, and tried to create a fictional framework that felt real enough. While I was struggling with this aspect of the story, I met the writer Peter Nathaniel Malae. His counsel on the subject was invaluable, and his writing, particularly his collection of short fiction, *Teach The Free Man*, was a big reference for me.

McCaul and I also visited a state prison, and I think that was really helpful for him as he tried to understand Keith's character and his options. But, honestly, the gang content was where I took the most creative liberties. It's a closed society, and I can only approach that

world from the outside, so I tried to keep it very non-specific.

Q: Keith's social world is racially mixed, and not necessarily in predictable ways. Did you write the characters "color-blind", or were their specific racial identities a big part of your thinking?

A: I had a very specific idea of how Keith navigates the racially segregated city of Baltimore, and that was reflected in the script. When we began casting, I started having doubts: ideologically, I wanted to approach the casting color-blind. I took race identifiers out of the script, but then readers were confused, adrift, not understanding some of the subtler dynamics between characters. It felt more honest to stick with my intent and through that logic reach a place that reflects the diversity of the city. In the end, all of the characters were cast as scripted.

*Press notes and Q&A by Hannah McGill*





## MATTHEW PORTERFIELD

Matt Porterfield (b. 1977) has written and directed four feature films, *Hamilton* (2006), *Putty Hill* (2011), *I Used To Be Darker* (2013) and *Sollers Point*. His work is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art and the Harvard Film Archive and has screened at the Whitney Biennial, the Walker Arts Center, Centre Pompidou, Cinémathèque Française, and film festivals such as Sundance, the Berlinale, and SXSW. In summer 2014, he wrote and directed his first narrative short, *Take What You Can Carry*, with a grant from the Harvard Film Study Center. It premiered in the Shorts Competition in Berlin in 2015. The following year, he co-produced and co-wrote Gaston Solnicki's first fiction feature,

*Készakallú*, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. As a producer, Matt has participated in IFP's No Borders, Cinemart, FIDLab, the Berlin Coproduction Market and the Venice Production Bridge. Matt teaches screenwriting, theory and film production at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, and is currently developing his next feature, *Check Me in Another Place*.

## MCCAUL LOMBARDI

Born in Baltimore, McCaul Lombardi originally planned to be a professional athlete. But after an injury, he moved to Los Angeles to pursue becoming an actor. Lombardi made his film debut in *American Honey* by Andrea Arnold, which had its world premiere at the 2016

Cannes Film Festival where it won the Jury Prize. Lombardi has next been seen in *PattiCake\$*, which premiered at the last Sundance Film Festival and was acquired for the world by Fox Searchlight. Early 2017, Lombardi appeared in a major worldwide advertising campaign for Ermenegildo Zegna, with Robert De Niro. Lombardi will soon be seen as lead actor in *Sollers Point* directed by Matt Porterfield.

## JIM BELUSHI

Jim recently finished starring in Woody Allen's next feature, *Wonder Wheel*, opposite Kate Winslet and Justin Timberlake. Immediately after he shot Jason Katims' Showtime pilot, *Mating*, starring with Taran Killam.

Jim can currently be seen recurring on the highly anticipated reboot of David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* for Showtime. Previously he was seen on in the Amazon series *Good Girls Revolt*, about the female movement in the 1960s set to the backdrop of the publication boom in New York. The cast included Anna Camp and Chris Diamatopolous. Lynda Obst produced with Dana Calvo.

His recent credits include the Lionsgate feature *The Whole Truth*, in which Jim stars opposite Keanu Reeves, Renee Zellweger and Gugu Mbatha-Raw. David Simon's long awaited mini-series for HBO entitled,

*Show Me a Hero*, opposite Oscar Isaac, Catherine Keener, Winona Ryder, Jon Bernthal and Alfred Molina for director Paul Haggis. He also stars opposite Mervyn Dineen and Mary Steenburgen in Wayne Roberts' beautiful film, *Katie Says Goodbye* which premiered at the 2016 Toronto Film Festival.

## ZAZIE BEETZ

Zazie will next be seen as the co-lead, opposite Ryan Reynolds, in *Deadpool 2*. She is best known to audiences as 'Van,' opposite Donald Glover, in FX's critically acclaimed show *Atlanta*.

Zazie recently wrapped Dean Devlin's *Geostorm* for Warner Brothers. Prior to that, she shot the female lead in the indie feature film *Slice* for writer/director Austin Vesely. Past films include *Sollers Point*, directed by Matt Porterfield, *The Undiscovered Country*, directed by Tim O'Connor, as well as Bart Freundlich's feature film *Wolves*, and Onur Turkel's *Applesauce*, which both premiered at Tribeca Film Festival. Zazie also recurs on Joe Swanberg's *Easy* for Netflix.

Zazie is a native New Yorker and attended LaGuardia High School.





























## TECHNICAL DETAILS

Duration  
Format  
Aspect Ratio  
Sound  
Original Language

1:41:06  
HD  
1.85  
5.1  
American English

## INTERNATIONAL SALES

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