

PRESS NOTES



TRUE THINGS

BY HARRY WOOTLIFF

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

Kate (Ruth Wilson) is sleepwalking through life when a chance sexual encounter with a charismatic stranger (Tom Burke) awakens her. High on infatuation, Kate is headed for an intoxicating car crash.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Kate Perkin, a single woman in her early thirties, works in a benefits office in the English coastal town of Ramsgate. The job is at once tedious and fraught; Kate escapes by Googling idyllic holiday locations. A moment of flirtation with a male claimant initially seems like a mere blip in her routine. But when the man shows up to meet her at the end of her working day, Kate finds herself propelled headlong into a liaison that displaces every other priority in her life. It starts with blowing off her close friend Alison, who wants nothing more than to fix her up with a nice respectable boyfriend. Then she starts lying to her employer, who already considers her a loose cannon. All to keep impulsive, unpredictable arrangements with a man about whom she knows almost nothing – he is saved in her phone only as “Blond”.

A blind date with a far more solid prospect, arranged by Alison, offers a route back to the safe and conventional, which Kate firmly rejects. She opts instead for a drugged and drunken night with Blond, which peaks with him declaring the two of them soulmates and asking her to accompany him on a trip to Spain for his sister’s wedding.

But when the high wears off, so does Blond’s warmth. He treats Kate coldly, helps himself to an indefinite loan of her car, and drops out of contact.

Pitched into confusion, Kate takes it out on her life, quarrelling with her parents and finally getting herself fired from her job.



Again, Kate tries to get things back on track. Again, Blond reappears – this time with an unexpected follow-up on his offer to take her to Spain. Kate resists, but weakly. Soon enough, she’s on a plane. Will sunlight disinfect her strange interactions with this charismatic, unreliable character? Will her “soulmate” let her know who he really is at last? Or is she being drawn in, once again, only to be pushed away?

WRITTEN BY
HANNAH MCGILL

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

"*True Things* is a cautionary tale of a destructive sexual relationship that is both complex and ordinary -a relationship so familiar to us that it's almost a rite of passage. It is a love story of sorts, which looks at the fragility of a woman's sense of self, at how women use relationships to explore their identity. Kate has lost a sense of who she really is, and accepted a version of herself that is shaped both by society, and by those close to her. We see how on her journey towards autonomy, she is compelled to let herself become consumed and derailed by a man, before eventually discovering self-authenticity. *True Things* is highly subjective and intimate and is really, fundamentally, about a woman's relationship with herself."

WRITTEN BY
HARRY WOOTLIFF



NOTES ON THE FILM

Early on in *True Things*, soon-to-be lovers Kate (Ruth Wilson) and “Blond” (Tom Burke) discuss the strange urge to jump that can strike someone looking down from a tall building. The impulse, says Blond, is “life-confirming”, rather than suicidal: “You could do it, but you don’t.” The relationship that he and Kate are commencing will test exactly such distinctions and divisions – for her, at least. In her early thirties, Kate is at a stage of life that sees friends, family and strangers alike all powerfully invested in how responsible, respectable and future-focused she’s being. After all, a woman can’t cast about uncertainly forever... can she? “You need to get your priorities right,” scolds Kate’s friend and colleague Alison (Hayley Squires), who is already raising a brood of kids.

What Kate finds herself prioritising, however, is not the future hope of a nuclear family. It is the intense, intermittent attention of a man whose name she doesn’t even know.

Based on the 2010 novel *True Things About Me* by Deborah Kay Davies, Harry Wootliff’s follow-up to her award-winning feature debut *Only You* anatomises a relationship experience as commonplace as it is shrouded in denial and shame. Who hasn’t pursued a love affair that had friends and family shaking their heads in worry and disapproval? How many of us have let risk into our lives, not through naivete or coercion, but knowingly – with every sense that anguish may ensue? And which among us hasn’t, sometimes, just wanted to jump?

True Things addresses this experience from the intensely subjective viewpoint of a character who is neither victim nor dupe, but a trapped soul for whom the chance to live more vividly is too tempting to resist. What looks like degradation from the outside feels – initially, at least – like bliss. For a film to acknowledge the visceral appeal and even the value of a crude, torrid, potentially dangerous liaison is taboo.

As viewers, we’re accustomed to heavy signposting: that casual sex spells danger; that the woman who goes “off the rails” will face severe penalties, if she even survives; that behaving yourself is its own reward. Through dazzling performances by Ruth Wilson and Tom Burke, however, and a perceptive, witty take by Wootliff, *True Things* invites us to consider another angle on the “toxic” relationship: one from which it offers welcome relief from the well-worn grooves of what’s supposed to be good for us. What’s toxic, after all, can also be intoxicating...

Harry Wootliff here works once again with Tristan Goligher of *The Bureau*, whose recent productions include Harry Macqueen’s *Supernova*, starring Colin Firth and Stanley Tucci; Aleem Khan’s *After Love*, with Joanna Scanlan; and *Little Joe*, directed by Jessica Hausner and starring Emily Beecham and Ben Whishaw. Further headiness is added to the *True Things* brew by the extraordinary cinematography of rising star Ashley Connor, whose agile, inquisitive camera takes us right to the fast-beating heart of the charged relationship between Kate and Blond.

Irreverent, unpredictable and intense, *True Things* showcases in its lead performances the range and charisma of two of the UK’s most dynamic and appealing performers and affirms Harry Wootliff as a sharp and empathetic chronicler of the mores of modern love. Whether it lands as a warning, a reminder, or a glimpse of paths not taken, it will resonate with anyone who knows how it feels to throw caution to the winds.

WRITTEN BY
HANNAH MCGILL

B I O G R A P H I E S

HARRY WOOLLIFF
WRITER/DIRECTOR

Harry WoolliFF is a writer and director. Her first feature film *Only You* (starring Laia Costa and Josh O'Connor) premiered at the 2018 London Film Festival. For *Only You*, she won the BIFA award for Best Debut Director, and was nominated for the BAFTA Award for Outstanding Debut.

Harry's debut short film *Nits* was BAFTA-nominated and selected for Cannes Directors' Fortnight. Her second short *Trip* premiered at Berlin Film Festival, won Best Short Film at Bradford International Film Festival, and was screened at 30 festivals worldwide. Harry was named as one of The Observer's Rising Stars for Film in 2019.

TOM BURKE
ACTOR

Tom was most recently seen in Netflix's highly acclaimed series *The Crown*, opposite Helena Bonham Carter, and as Orson Welles in David Fincher's Oscar-nominated feature *Mank*. Prior to that, he played the lead role of Anthony in Joanna Hogg's feature *The Souvenir*, which won the World Cinema Grand Jury Prize: Dramatic at Sundance 2019 and for which he was nominated for a BIFA and a Critics' Circle Award for Best Actor. Other recent credits include onstage as John Rosmer in *Rosmerholm*, *The Deep Blue Sea* at The National Theatre; the BBC mini-series *War and Peace*; and as Athos in *The Musketeers* also for the BBC. Upcoming releases include the independent feature *Klokkenluider*; Sky's *Extinction* opposite Paapa Essiedu; and Alan Moore's *The Show*. Tom is currently filming Sebastian Lelio's *The Wonder* opposite Florence Pugh for Netflix, and will shortly be seen reprising his role as Cormoran Strike in the next instalment of JK Rowling's acclaimed series for the BBC, opposite Holliday Grainger.

RUTH WILSON
PRODUCER/ACTOR

Ruth Wilson is a multi-award-winning actress and producer of stage, screen and television. Described by The Guardian as a "courageous, edgy and compelling talent", Wilson has become one of Britain's most lauded artists. This year she was awarded an MBE for services to Drama.

Wilson's first major TV role in the BBC's 2006 miniseries *Jane Eyre* earned her a BAFTA and Golden Globe nomination for Best Actress. Subsequent television performances include Mrs Coulter in the BBC/HBO *His Dark Materials*; Alison Bailey in Showtime's *The Affair*, for which she won a Golden Globe for Best Actress in a Drama Series in 2015; and Alice Morgan in *Luther*. In 2019 she was BAFTA-nominated for her performance as her own grandmother in the BBC miniseries, *Mrs Wilson*, which she also Executive Produced.

Film performances have seen Wilson work with a range of directors including Lenny Abrahamson, Gore Verbinski, Joe Wright, John Cameron Mitchell and Steven Knight. For *Dark River*, directed by Clio Barnard, Wilson received a BIFA Best Actress nomination. Most recently she appeared in the Emmy-nominated HBO film *Oslo*, directed by Bartlett Sher and produced by Steven Spielberg and Marc Platt.

Wilson is a mainstay on the London and Broadway stages and the recipient of two Olivier Awards and two Tony nominations. Most recently, the Broadway production of *King Lear* saw her play both Cordelia and The Fool opposite Glenda Jackson. In 2013 Wilson made her debut as a theatre director with *The El Train*, a series of Eugene O'Neill one-act plays performed at Hoxton Hall.

In 2020 Wilson set up her production company, LADY LAZARUS. *True Things* is the first film to be made under the LADY LAZARUS umbrella. Other projects include TV and film productions in partnership with HBO and The Ink Factory.

ASHLEY CONNOR
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Ashley Connor is a New York-based director of photography. She was nominated for an 2019 Independent Spirit Award for Best Cinematography for her work on Josephine Decker's *Madeline's Madeline*. Her breadth of style can be seen in work as diverse as Desiree Akhavan's *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* (Sundance Grand Jury Prize 2018) and Daniel Scheinert's *The Death of Dick Long* (2019), as well as in music videos for artists including Jenny Lewis, Angel Olsen and Beach House. She most recently wrapped Lena Dunham's forthcoming film *Sharp Stick*.

INTERVIEW

HARRY WOOTLIFF (DIRECTOR)

Q: HOW DID YOU BECOME ATTACHED TO *TRUE THINGS* AND WHAT APPEALED TO YOU ABOUT THE PROJECT?

A: Ruth [Wilson] and Jude [Law, producer] had optioned the book, and The Bureau were already involved. I was working with The Bureau on *Only You* and became aware of *True Things*. I went along and pitched for the project, really, and that was that! My take on the source - what really spoke to me in the book - was the obsessiveness: that feeling of being consumed by infatuation. Your whole life rests on it, you get sucked into it - it's Shakespearean in a way, it's like somebody sprinkles magic dust on you and you see the donkey as this amazing perfect man! But it was the atmosphere of the book I drew on. What I felt was really important is that we're with the relationship in the same way that Kate the character is. It's important we're drawn to him as well; I wanted us to be derailed. But I was really keen as well to make it a two way thing. It's not like she's making it up; he's part of it. It's a dance between the two of them.

Q: IT'S STRIKING THAT ALTHOUGH THE RELATIONSHIP SETS OFF OUR ALARM BELLS AS AN AUDIENCE, KATE IS NOT FRAMED AS A VICTIM

A: She's not a victim, and she's not a bunny boiler, which I really hate. I didn't want it to be that. The truth is, we don't know, just as she doesn't know, what's really between them. That's the fascination with having this kind of relationship and with looking back on it: what was going on? Was he into it? Was I making it all up? That feeling of trying to understand the man, of being determined to understand him... I have my ideas about it, and Ruth and Tom [Burke] had their ideas - and we don't have to agree.

Q: RUTH WILSON ORIGINATED THE PROJECT WHEN SHE READ AND OPTIONED DEBORAH KAY DAVIES' BOOK. WHAT DID SHE BRING ONSCREEN?

A: She's just brilliant, and so interesting; and I think also so intelligent and collaborative, and so determined to keep making interesting choices with her career, and to portray characters that aren't wholly good.

Q: THE CASTING OF *BLOND* IS INTERESTING: IN TERMS OF LOOKS AND SOCIAL CLASS, TOM BURKE IS OFFBEAT AND HARD TO PLACE.

A: Tom has this incredible charisma, and he's so good at portraying characters you can't quite work out. If we'd cast *Blond* totally conventionally super-good-looking, then it would be clear that the source of his power was sheer beauty. With Tom, there's a sensitivity and a soulfulness. I think because of that, even when he's being quite unpleasant, it's always complex, because of the way Tom delivers it. Tom struggled with when he wasn't nice to her. But the point is that *Blond* is uncomfortable; he's in fight-or-flight mode; he pulls away every time.

Q: SO FOR YOU, THE STORY ISN'T ONE IN WHICH THE WOMAN IS PASSIVE WHILE THE MAN HOLDS ALL THE CARDS?

A: Kate isn't passive. She's determined. She's driven - towards him. She's so adrift in her life, with an unsatisfying job, unsatisfying friends; and we're sold a romantic dream that once you have someone else, you're complete. Plus, infatuation makes you high; you feel amazing. So as much as he's bad for her, he's good for her: she grows. In a way, he is the person who understands her: he pushes her to work out who she is, to become more autonomous and to discover her authenticity. I think it's very female that we search for who we are through our relationships.

Q: KATE ALSO SEEMS STALKED BY THE EXPECTATION THAT SHE SHOULD BE PLANNING TO HAVE CHILDREN

A: In your thirties, there is that pressure: everybody around you is settling down. As girls, we're sold the idea that our happiness will come through a man. It was interesting - when I was looking for a track for the final sequence, I listened to a lot of songs, and since the beginning of popular music, it's all about finding your man...! And I didn't want a song about finding your man, because this is about finding yourself.

INTERVIEW

HARRY WOOTLIFF (DIRECTOR)

CONTINUED

Q: THE SHOOTING STYLE IS VERY INTIMATE. DID YOU ENVISAGE THAT YOURSELF? DID DOP ASHLEY CONNOR BRING IT?

A: We had to be with Kate all the way through, I knew that. There was a convention we set up that at the start of the film, it was more structured and still; and then when Blond came into her life, it was much looser. We broke it sometimes, but generally that's the structure we went for. I picked Ashley because she's quite experimental; her camerawork is really emotional; and she's female-led - she likes shooting women. I wanted it to be really visceral and textured, and she was definitely the cinematographer who jumped out at me.



Q: DO YOU EXPECT PEOPLE TO RECOGNISE THEIR OWN, SIMILAR RELATIONSHIP EXPERIENCES THROUGH THE LENS OF TRUE THINGS?

A: I think women will relate to it, but hopefully as an audience you translate it into you. Everybody's been there! When I explain to men that the film is about that one relationship that's so consuming, they say "oh yeah, I know all about that..."

Q: DO YOU FEEL SYMPATHY FOR BLOND, DESPITE HIS ELUSIVENESS AND OCCASIONAL CRUELTY?

A: I have to be on everybody's side. Blond feels like he's doing the right thing! I did write up a profile of why he was what he was. Fundamentally, he has a fear of intimacy, and that underpins his relationships. Whether he ever comes through that and works it out, I don't know. But to fall in love, you've got to be prepared to be hurt - and he can't do that.

Q: KATE'S CONNECTION WITH HIM IS ALSO VERY PHYSICAL; IS THAT PART OF WHAT MAKES IT TABOO FOR HER?

A: She's driven by sex, and we grow up being told we shouldn't do that - shouldn't have sex on a first date; should be holding back. Ruth and I talked a lot about that - that there was a really strong sexual element. She wasn't looking for hearts and flowers.

Q: HOW DID YOU APPROACH SHOOTING THE SEXUAL SCENES?

A: There's so little nudity in this, but you hardly notice. I always shoot different versions - nudity and no nudity. It was important that it was rude, and sexy. But it was also really important that Ruth could be confident Ashley and I wouldn't shoot her body without her knowing it, and that she'd have a say in what was used. Once the actors know that, they can focus their attention on what they're feeling; then, it's like a dance. I drew on the things that make you feel seen, and understood. And you're like: *I'll do anything. I don't care. I'm on another planet...*

INTERVIEW

RUTH WILSON ("KATE PERKIN"/PRODUCER)

Q: HOW DID YOU ENCOUNTER THE NOVEL *TRUE THINGS ABOUT ME*, AND WHAT APPEALED TO YOU ABOUT IT?

A: Jude [Law] and I had just finished performing in a play together, and his agent was sending him possible material to produce. He passed me Deborah Kay Davies' book, wondering if there was something worth pursuing. I read it and agreed that there was something really fascinating at its core. We bought the rights together. What I loved about the book was the character's acute and humorous observation of the world around her - it made me laugh out loud, despite the bad choices she continued to make. This was a smart, funny, messy and modern woman.

At that time, it felt unique. At first we wondered about being more experimental - shooting a series of moments and handing them over to an editor - but soon we realised the story warranted a writer. That process began with Molly Davies, and then alongside Tristan Goligher, we began working with Harry Wootliff as a writer director. So this is a project that has been with me for a long time, and finally, it's here on the screen.

Q: SOME WOULD CONSIDER THIS CHARACTER TO BE IN CRISIS. WHAT IS THAT YOU THINK MAKES HER SO RELATABLE?

A: I feel we've all been there - had bad relationships; made bad choices; been with that person where all your friends go, "NO!!". I also think women especially can relate to the pressures Kate feels to marry, to have children, to conform. She's been sleepwalking through her life. It's Blond who wakes her from that slumber, but she pins all her hopes on romantic love - which we're still sold as the answer to everything. And she accepts his bad behaviour, because she thinks that is her only option.



Q: SO KATE'S STORY FOR YOU HAS WIDER APPLICATION IN TERMS OF WHAT IS EXPECTED OF WOMEN HER AGE?

A: Yes: it's really not about her relationship with him so much as it's about self-actualisation: a woman's relationship with herself. We are among a generation of women that have had greater choice and opportunity than ever before. We can truly be economically independent, can be defined by things outside marriage and children - and yet if you don't do the norm, people "worry" for you. It's a fascinating struggle of internal and external pressures, and I still don't think the world is set up for women to have both. You can be so surrounded by other people's opinions of what you should or shouldn't do - "does he want kids?", "he's not good enough!", "hold off as long as possible!" - it's sometimes hard to be clear about what you truly want. *True Things* is about that internal struggle.

Q: THOUGH *BLOND* TREATS HER POORLY, KATE DOESN'T COME ACROSS AS HELPLESS. HOW DID YOU MANAGE THAT BALANCE?

A: I was always really insistent that Kate wasn't a victim. It takes two to tango, and although *Blond* behaves pretty badly, she chooses him. She chooses to see what she wants to see. In fact, I would say she drives the whole relationship. She's determined and persistent. That was what was great about Harry. She really understood the "grey" - the complexity of both these characters. That was why it was also important to find moments of humour in Kate. That despite the bad and sad, she could still laugh at herself. She's creative, imaginative and passionate; it's both her strength and weakness.

Also what's interesting in this film is that it is so internalised, so subjective; there is no overarching perspective. In other roles, I would quite meticulously draft an arc of a character journey. *True Things* felt like a series of moments seamlessly stitched together. My challenge was not to dictate Kate's journey, but just to be present in every sense - to follow her highs and lows and not comment or judge them. As a result the performance I think feels very pure.

INTERVIEW

RUTH WILSON ("KATE PERKIN" / PRODUCER)

CONTINUED

Q: DOES BLOND ALSO MERIT
OUR SYMPATHY?

A: I think so. There's conflict within him too, and there's damage there. Blond could have just been a generic bad boy from the wrong side of the tracks. Then he would have simply been an object to Kate, and it would have been hard to elicit sympathy for the relationship. The truth is never as simple as that. And Harry understood this. She has enormous empathy for her characters, and insists on getting to the heart of them. And then in casting Tom Burke we then had an even more wonderfully complex Blond. It was a fascinating process, to see the work getting deeper at each stage.

Q: AS YOU SAY, YOU'VE PLAYED
NUMEROUS CHARACTERS WHOSE
MORALITY IS AMBIGUOUS OR
QUESTIONABLE. IS THAT A CONSCIOUS
UNDERTAKING ON YOUR PART?

A: The duality of people is what I'm interested in, always. We all have the capacity to be horrific and glorious in equal measure. Whether it's playing my Granny [in the 2018 miniseries *Mrs Wilson*], or Marisa in *His Dark Materials*, it's never simply good or bad, or heroes or victims. With Kate, it was about placing her passivity and desire to please against her determination, and her humour and charm alongside her indifference and self-absorption. Hopefully, the audience is in equal measure frustrated and charmed by Kate.



Q: YOU MENTIONED THE FILM
COMING VERY MUCH FROM INSIDE
KATE'S EXPERIENCE. HOW WAS THAT
ACHIEVED?

A: Very early on we decided against using a voice-over or direct address, which meant we had to be a lot more creative about getting inside her head and her heart. The way the movie was written, photographed, edited and sound designed all had to stem from Kate. It was about concentrating the focus on what she was feeling, hearing, touching at each moment. And it was when this was at odds with the picture that things became interesting. For example, the car park scene, when she first meets Blond, from the outside looks dangerous, reckless and grim. But to Kate, it was pure romance and desire. Harry did a masterful job of finding the balance of that.

Q: WHAT DID ASHLEY CONNOR'S
WORK BRING?

A: Ashley was truly brilliant. I have never worked with a DoP so collaborative and in love with the creative process of storytelling. She moves the camera emotionally - she feels where the scene is, instinctively, and finds the detail of what you're doing. That's a lovely dynamic as an actor - it's really freeing, because you can focus on your performance in the knowledge that she'll pick up on the detail. And she loves women, respects women, and has a woman's view of the female body. It meant filming those very intimate moments of Kate on her own were shot through a truly feminine lens; they felt safe and truthful and fun. It was a complete joy working in such close collaboration with Harry and Ashley.

INTERVIEW

RUTH WILSON ("KATE PERKIN"/PRODUCER)

CONTINUED

Q: CHEMISTRY IS HARD TO DEFINE, BUT YOU AND TOM BURKE CERTAINLY HAVE IT. FROM WHERE YOUR CHARACTERS FIRST MEET IN THE BENEFITS OFFICE. IS IT DOWN TO THE WRITING? THE DIRECTION? IS IT JUST THERE?

A: It's a bit of everything, I think! I've never worked with Tom before, although I've loved his work and I've wanted to. The scene in the office was at the end of our first week of shooting (and our last, before COVID put a temporary stop to proceedings). And I thought: "ah - now I've found my play partner." Suddenly, there was colour in her drab world. And I think it was then we all knew we had a film. I think what gets called chemistry is really about connection; listening; being open, vulnerable, brave. When I haven't had it, it's because there's a block - no connection; we're not bouncing. With Tom it was instant. And once you find that, once you have a play partner, you can keep pushing it, get detailed with it. You feel safe and free to explore.

Q: THE OFFBEAT WAY HE PLAYS BLOND MAKES KATE'S ATTRACTION LESS MASOCHISTIC OR SHALLOW THAN IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN - HE'S NOT JUST A MOUSTACHE-TWIRLING VILLAIN.

A: Tom makes Blond much more complex, with his own hang-ups and injuries, wants and desires. We are angered by him, but at the same time feel sorry for him. It makes Kate's attraction to Blond much more believable.

Q: DID YOU DEVELOP A BACKSTORY FOR KATE? DID YOU HAVE A SENSE OF SOMETHING HAVING HAPPENED TO HER THAT HAD LED HER TO THIS POINT?

A: No, I didn't feel there was anything overt. I didn't see her as damaged. She's bored, she hates her job, and she hasn't had the gumption to take risks. She's trapped in a cycle, with her parents, with her friend. But I did feel there was creativity inside her, something unfulfilled - that's where her cynicism comes from, stifled creativity. He says to her, "You haven't found your tribe," and he's right. He helps her to free herself.

Q: IT'S INTERESTING HOW PANICKED WE FEEL FOR HER EVEN THOUGH REALLY, ALL SHE DOES IS REJECT WHAT'S EXPECTED OF HER.

A: We fear for her because what she's doing is not what you're supposed to want for your life. Perhaps some of it seems reckless, but essentially it's her process of self-discovery. People project their own wants and needs onto her. Even with loving parents, there can be that inability to connect.

Q: HOW DO THE FANTASY AND DREAM SEQUENCES PLAY IN?

A: Having decided against a voice-over or direct address, we had to find other ways into her psyche. The dreams also pull it out of being just a domestic drama; they let us into her visual imagination. For me, that was important - that she's an imaginative person, and we can use the visuals to get inside her mind.

Q: THIS IS THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE BEEN A PRODUCER ON A FEATURE FILM - WAS IT A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE?

A: It was a labour of love. What I love about producing is the collaboration with all creatives, working closely of course with Harry and Ashley but also with the editor, composer, set designer. Seeing a project through from its initial inception to its first screening is truly rewarding; it feels more holistic than just acting. Part of the enjoyment of this was also about working low-budget. There's so much less pressure; fewer demands - there's so much more freedom to be creative. It was such an open, expressive set. And I had two partners in crime, Tristan Goligher at The Bureau and Ben Jackson at Riff-Raff, without whom this film would never have happened.

INTERVIEW

TOM BURKE ("BLOND")

Q: WHAT DREW YOU TO THE SCRIPT
FOR *TRUE THINGS*?

A: In terms of the character, I thought maybe it was a bit of a repeat of [his role in Joanna Hogg's] *The Souvenir*, in that it was playing a bullshitter - albeit a beer-swilling bullshitter, as opposed to a heroin-using bullshitter! But it's a different journey. Because by the end you realise - or I think you do - that he's gone through quite a big change, even if he's done so too late for him and her. I know there's physical violence in the book; I did ask why they weren't making that story, and I thought the reasons were interesting. They weren't in any way trying to be apologetic for my character; it was more a case of making it about her journey, and more about somebody going, "I'm better than this", than "I absolutely have to get out of this horrible, dangerous relationship." She's just going "this is a bit shit." And a lot of women stay in things that are a bit shit - if that's not an awful generalisation to make. I get that impression.

I think in the book he's sort of described as looking like a sort of Adonis. Without being too down on myself... that's not me. So there was a sense in which this was a guy who was a little bit... lost. There are warning signs there - even the costume; he's dressing like something out of a 90s boy band. And yet, there's something infectious there - possibly because he's desperate to live his life in a very adrenalised way. "Let's not think about anything," you know. That's attractive, in a weird way, when you're in a certain place.

Q: THE WOMEN ON THE FILM ALL
SEEM TO HAVE UNDERSTOOD VERY
CLEARLY WHY KATE WOULD HAVE
GONE THERE; AND AS VIEWERS WE
SEE HIS SHADINESS BUT ALSO
HIS APPEAL.

A: I thought there was a lot of ambiguity in the script. The scene where I'm looking in her kitchen cupboards... I said, "Of course, he could be looking for anything." And Harry [Vootliff] said, "No, he's definitely looking for food!" And I said, "I don't think he's *definitely* looking for food." She was coming at it from Kate's perspective - as the eternal optimist, and romantic. It was sort of my job to go... "Well, I'm not sure about that."

Q: SO YOU COULD SEE HIS DARKER
MOTIVATIONS, WHEN EVERYONE ELSE
WAS A LITTLE BIT IN LOVE WITH HIM?

A: Well, I try not to come down too moralistically on characters. When you're in the middle of it, playing him, you're just trying to come from the centre of him. Retrospectively, two things happen: you go: "Actually, no, I can't frame that in any other way than somebody using somebody else, even if that's not how it feels if you're that person!"; and also, realising how much of myself I put in it. Bits of myself I didn't even know were there. I felt very weird about people watching *The Souvenir*, because I feel there's an ugly bit of me there; and I probably feel the same about this one. But it's all on the human spectrum, so I guess it's better to explore these things and have conversations about them than not.

Q: THERE'S ALSO WHAT *BLOND* DOES
DO FOR KATE: ARGUABLY, HE'S THE
ONE WHO OPENS HER LIFE UP
FOR HER AND PUSHES HER
TOWARDS CHANGE.

A: Yeah, I guess. And that's something that's a key ingredient in a good story - that kind of doublethink.

Q: WHAT CREATES THE KIND OF
CHEMISTRY WE SEE BETWEEN YOU
AND RUTH WILSON HERE, FROM THAT
FIRST SCENE IN *THE OFFICE*?

A: It's trust. I say that like it's a simple thing, and actually, it's not, because trust doesn't always happen - and it's something you have to offer. People have all kinds of theories about chemistry - they think you have to be having some sort of affair, or else you have to hate each other. I don't think it's any of those things - I think all those things get in the way. I think it's trust. I haven't worked with Ruth before, and I wouldn't say I knew her particularly well before this, but I have known her for a while, and I think you build up a kind of understanding of each other's work. And that scene was the very first thing we shot, so we did hit the ground running, in a sense. Chemistry has to be idiosyncratic; it has to be something that exists in a very particular way between two particular people. When two actors go in for a chemistry read, it can produce something very weird, where you're both doing a really clichéd, outline version of what chemistry is. So I never think that's a good idea. It's maybe better to just rock up and hope for the best.

INTERVIEW

TOM BURKE ("BLOND")

CONTINUED

Q: WAS THE SHOOT EMOTIONALLY
INTENSE FOR YOU?

A: It wasn't always the calmest energy! I'm not saying that came from any one person – it was more that there was always an ongoing conversation about trying to make something that you don't feel like you've seen before. When there's a love story element, you have to keep having those conversations; otherwise you just dip into some kind of trope. It was a really good team for that; Ashley [Connor] was part of that as well.

Q: DID IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR
YOU WORKING WITH SUCH A
FEMALE-LED TEAM?

A: Look, I was very aware it was Kate's story. Not that I felt I was being a tube of paint in that; it was a complex story – but I think it was probably right that it was being made by a largely female team. More importantly, that they were people who'd really connected with the material. It makes sense that they would be women – but we can connect with all kinds of stories in all kinds of ways.

Q: HARRY SPOKE ABOUT EVOLVING
HER OWN BACKSTORY FOR BLOND –
DO YOU DO THAT TO GET INSIDE
A CHARACTER?

A: I think you do that in a kind of rational way, and then it gets really weird. I get a weird sense of him. When we shot the aftermath of them having sex by the lake, when he goes into that strange place – that was when I went, "oh, God, he's *this* guy." It was written in the script, but it's in the doing of it that you feel what he's feeling. I remember going, "Ah, this is going to be a funny job; because this man's whole life is centred around this feeling." Whatever backstory you've come up with, those moments are what end up defining the character.

Q: YOU MEAN, THE FEELING THAT HE'S
RISKED INTIMACY AND SO HAS TO
COMPLETELY WITHDRAW?

A: Yes, which – without wanting to create another monolith – I think is a very male thing. There are all kinds of theories about what it's about, and obviously it's not there all the time, but it's in some men in a very pronounced way. That was my in, more than a backstory. That and a feeling of regret – of opportunities missed, and time catching up, and wanting to feel alive. But also, when you're doing scenes with an actress like Ruth, so much feeling is generated on the spot. Things start to really gather.



INTERVIEW

ASHLEY CONNOR (DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY)

Q: WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO WORK
ON *TRUE THINGS*?

A: I read the script and I said, "I've never seen a woman depicted like this, in this type of relationship; I've never seen it honoured in such a way." There was that initial pull. I truly feel like I haven't seen a film that makes you feel that way it feels when a relationship ends; when the magic dissipates. And Ruth [Wilson] - I just find her to be one of the hands down best living actors. Knowing that she would play Kate, I knew it was a good project to sign up for. I love watching her; I'm so compelled by her. Even if she's playing somebody evil, there's an empathy there; you feel for that person. You're always worried when you read a script that it will get translated into the lowest common denominator. But I saw *Only You*, and I just knew that this was the team to make this movie, and the time to make this movie. I was just really enthusiastic about it. I'm attracted to movies that I think add to the narrative landscape for women; that's what will make me most interested in a project. Harry's and my first conversation was just so easy. I was like, "I know Kate; I am Kate; Kate is within me..." I've not seen a character that I've so clearly identified with. You don't want to talk about this level of loss of control; it can be an embarrassment. But it happens to all of us.

Q: HOW DO YOU BEGIN WORK?
HOW MUCH IS PLANNED OUT AND
DISCUSSED BEFOREHAND, AND HOW
MUCH SPONTANEOUS?

A: I adjust myself to however directors want to work; but I think Harry and I work very similarly. To me what is so important is lot of conversations in prep. Harry and I were talking through scenes; taking the script apart; looking at films that we love, music, art; talking about who Kate was. When I make a movie about a certain person's perspective, I like to be able to inhabit that perspective. And we didn't want Kate to feel like a sad person. We wanted to have a playful time with this character, and I think you see that in the performance and in the way that we approached shooting her. It's not ever about speaking down to that character; it's only about giving them light. So in terms of my relationship with Tom's character, Blond, it's similar: the camera has to feel that same pull towards him that Kate does, and the same disgust, or confusion. It's not about seeing Blond for what he is! Kate's perspective is the emotional core of the entire movie. And when you hinge a movie on one character, it becomes very focused.

Q: THE PANDEMIC AND RESULTING
SHUTDOWNS INTERRUPTED SHOOTING.
HOW DID THIS AFFECT THE PROJECT?

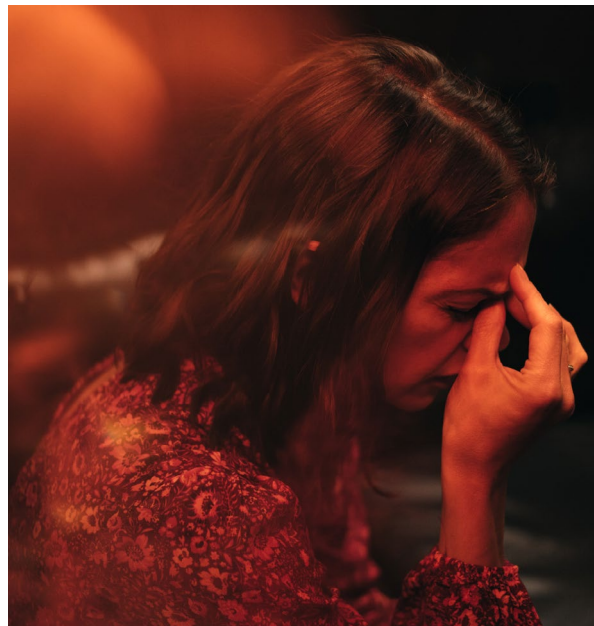
A: The making of the movie was so disjointed, it was insane. Harry did it against all the odds that you could possibly imagine- she went from being pregnant making a movie, to making a movie internationally in a global pandemic having just given birth. I was like: "I'm exhausted, how are you doing this?" She's a hero. But also, while making the movie, I was given a whole new perspective on it. One week into shooting, we went into total isolation - total lack of human connection. When people started coming out again, I saw all of my friends who had been living alone, without touch, without love, just really desiring these connections - and there was a recurring theme of Kate stories! It wasn't just straight people, it was queers, everybody: this desire to throw oneself off the cliff into love.

Q: SO THE SITUATION ACTUALLY
ELUCIDATED THE FILM'S THEMES?

A: I know that's a grand statement, but I really believe it. That the film really resonates - it speaks to that sense of desire and need and necessity. When we got back to shooting we had this changed perspective. A different energy, unlike anything I've felt shooting a movie, from the crew, the creatives, the actors. So protective of the movie; so cautious of the process; so wanting to be there. We weren't able to do our job for many, many months, and once this came back, it was like - we have to give it our best! We all became a little family unit.

Q: YOUR CAMERAWORK HAS AN
INTIMACY AND A PHYSICALITY THAT
DRAWS COMMENT: WHAT DO YOU
THINK IS DIFFERENT IN THE WAY
YOU OPERATE?

A: Not all of my work lands in this bubble, but I think my most exciting work, my most heartfelt work lands within this bubble. I'm present on a movie like this or [Josephine Decker's] *Madeline's Madeline* in a way that I'm not present on other movies where I'm just doing the job. And it's emotionally exhausting, because I'm trying to inhabit this person and really live within the character. It relates to acting, in my mind. Being first person. But I'm giving it every part of me - really throwing myself against the work - and that can be very exhausting for me.



INTERVIEW

ASHLEY CONNOR (DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY)

CONTINUED

Q: DO YOU OBSERVE THINGS
DIFFERENTLY BECAUSE YOU'RE
A WOMAN?

A: Anyone can occupy the male gaze, regardless of gender; it's a certain thing that we've been fed in terms of how we visualise and conceptualise women and eroticism and pleasure. That's why people don't really identify with the female gaze.

When I made [The Miseducation of] Cameron Post, the question with Desiree [Akhavan] the director was: when we were young women, dating girls, what would we have wanted to see onscreen? What would have related to how we were having sex in high school? That's where I always position myself. I hate the way so many people photograph sex scenes, where it's not about what is pleasurable. People still get it wrong, and feed out content that I don't think speaks truth to the female experience. A movie like this is so deeply necessary, because we still have a long way to go in understanding and processing new types of narrative like this. That's why I had this emotional experience at the end of making it. I was watching the final rundown of the film, and I was like – "we actually accomplished the goal that we set out to! We made a new kind of film for women." It gets added into the arsenal of how women can visualise themselves.

Q: IS YOUR INTENSE METHOD OF
WORKING A FEATURE OF LOW-BUDGET
PRODUCTION? IS IT POSSIBLE ON
LARGER-SCALE PRODUCTIONS
THAN THIS ONE?

A: I love all types of cinematography – and I can't always do movies like this, because they're so exhausting to me! – but it is a different practice on larger projects. There's just so many more people involved; so many more voices in the room. One's not necessarily better than the other; it's about finding a balance. But where my heart is the most is when it's a small group of people connecting. You do just feel it in a different way. We were all on the same page creatively, and I think you see that. I drove Harry and the baby and the doula to set every day, you know? When you have that level of personal involvement, it refines what you're doing to a tip. That's what we all really loved that about this movie – how connected we all were making it. How much of a voice Ruth had. This was Ruth's baby to begin with; and to watch it come together and come to life was very exciting for all of us. I'm so proud of it.



COMPANIES

LADY LAZARUS

LADY LAZARUS was founded in 2019 by Ruth Wilson and Ryan Selzer. The first film to be made by the LADY LAZARUS umbrella will be *TRUE THINGS*. In 2018, Wilson starred in and served as Executive Producer on the drama series *MRS WILSON* for BBC One and PBS Masterpiece with Snowed In Productions, which received 4 BAFTA nominations including Best Mini-Series, and Best Actress for Wilson. LADY LAZARUS will produce their first television series in conjunction with HBO, as well as a feature film produced alongside THE INK FACTORY. LADY LAZARUS is currently developing projects across various platforms including feature films, stage, and podcasts. Wilson and Selzer believe in the resurrection of distinctly vivid literary works that have been overlooked and unsung. Their projects are helmed by filmmakers and writers that engage in imaginative, psychological, and passionate storytelling.

THE BUREAU

For over 20 years, The Bureau have established a reputation for building strong relationships with outstanding talent. Dedicated in their collaboration with filmmakers, The Bureau strive to entertain audiences with stories that are distinctive, emotional and thought provoking.

The Bureau's recent titles include Harry Macqueen's *Supernova* starring Colin Firth and Stanley Tucci; Aleem Khan's *After Love*, which was selected for Cannes, Toronto and Telluride; and Jessica Hausner's *Little Joe*, which premiered in Cannes where Emily Beecham won Best Actress.

Other notable films include Harry Wootliff's *Only You*, starring Josh O'Connor and Laia Costa, and Andrew Haigh's *45 Years*, which garnered Charlotte Rampling an Academy Award® nomination for Best Actress.

COMPANIES

CONTINUED

riffraff

Riff Raff UK was formed by Jude Law and Ben Jackson, who have been collaborators for over 20 years at the top end of film and television, covering a diverse range of productions.

They first produced together in a co-production with Paramount Pictures of *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow*, starring Gwyneth Paltrow and Angelina Jolie.

Following this experience, they saw the potential to build upon their shared passions and taste in literature, graphic novels and original ideas and began further developing their own projects.

Riff Raff UK produced its second film – *Sleuth* – in a co-production with Sony Picture Classics, starring Michael Caine, directed by Kenneth Branagh and written by Harold Pinter. *Sleuth* secured premieres at both the Venice and Toronto film festivals.

2016 and 2019 saw Jude play the title role in HBO's *The Young Pope* and its sequel *The New Pope*. Law and Jackson were also credited producers.

True Things was adapted from a book they optioned. Ruth Wilson came onboard as producer and actor to develop further, and it was completed this year, directed by Harry Wootliff.

There has always been a juggling act between Jude's career as an actor and the company's production side. While Ben runs the day-to-day operations and on set responsibilities, he and Jude work in tandem creatively, overseeing the continuing development and company vision. All their projects stem from a passion to entertain, challenge and inform through inspiring and fresh storytelling.

They have now accumulated a deck of varied projects and material that reflects them as a company, and have a first look development deal with New Republic Pictures.

CAST

ROLE	CAST NAME
KATE	RUTH WILSON
BLOND	TOM BURKE
ALISON	HAYLEY SQUIRES
MUM	ELIZABETH RIDER
DAD	FRANK MCCUSKER
NAN	ANN FIRBANK
ROB	TOM WESTON JONES
GAVIN	NATHAN AMPOFO
DAVID	MICHAEL MORELAND
YOUNG MAN	CHARLIE HEPTINSTALL
CARE WORKER	GLEDYS IBARRA
PARTY MAN 1	JOSHUA SINCLAIR-EVANS
PARTY MAN 2	JORDAN JOHN
ENGLISH GIRL	MELISSA NEAL
MAN ON BEACH	ARTHUR CULL
KITCHEN DEMONSTRATOR	ALICE SNOW

KEY CREW

DETAIL

CONTACTS

TECHNICAL DETAILS

DURATION : 102 MINUTES
FORMAT : HD
ASPECT RATIO : 1:33
SOUND : 5.1
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE : ENGLISH

INTERNATIONAL PRESS IN VENICE

International Rescue PR

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Matthew Sanders
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Head of International Sales -
Clémentine Hugot
Head of Festivals -
Geraldine Bryant

ROLE

CREW NAME

DIRECTOR

HARRY WOOTLIFF

WRITERS

HARRY WOOTLIFF & MOLLY DAVIES

PRODUCERS

TRISTAN GOLIGHER (THE BUREAU)
RUTH WILSON (LADY LAZARUS)
BEN JACKSON (RIFF RAFF UK)
JUDE LAW (RIFF RAFF UK)

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

ROSE GARNETT (BBC FILM)
EVA YATES (BBC FILM)
LIZZIE FRANCKE (BFI)
VINCENT GADELLE
(THE BUREAU SALES)

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

ASHLEY CONNOR

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

ANDY DRUMMOND

EDITOR

TIM FULFORD

COMPOSER

ALEX BARANOWSKI

COSTUME DESIGNER

MATTHEW PRICE

HAIR & MAKE UP DESIGNER

NADIA STACEY

MUSIC SUPERVISOR

CONNIE FARR

SUPERVISING SOUND EDITOR

JOAKIM SUNDSTRÖM

CASTING DIRECTOR

KAHLEEN CRAWFORD

THE
BUREAU

riffraff

LADY LAZARUS

