

# ***THE MERCY***

## **Production Notes**



**“I am going because I would have no peace if I stayed.”**

**— Donald Crowhurst**

### **RELEASE DATES**

**UK :** February 9th 2018

### **Publicity Contacts**

[jessica.brown@studiocanal.co.uk](mailto:jessica.brown@studiocanal.co.uk)

[suzanne.noble@studiocanal.co.uk](mailto:suzanne.noble@studiocanal.co.uk)

+44 (0)207 534 2700

Images and Press materials: [www.studiocanalpress.co.uk](http://www.studiocanalpress.co.uk)

# THE MERCY

## Short Synopsis

Following his Academy Award® winning film *The Theory of Everything*, James Marsh directs the incredible true story of Donald Crowhurst (COLIN FIRTH, *The King's Speech*, *Kingsman: The Secret Service*, *The Railway Man*), an amateur sailor who competed in the 1968 Sunday Times Golden Globe Race in the hope of becoming the first person in history to single-handedly circumnavigate the globe without stopping. With an unfinished boat and his business and house on the line, Donald leaves his wife, Clare (RACHEL WEISZ, *The Light Between Oceans*, *The Lobster*) and their children behind, hesitantly embarking on an adventure on his boat the Teignmouth Electron.

Co-starring DAVID THEWLIS (*Anomalisa*, *The Theory of Everything*) and KEN STOTT ('*War & Peace*', *The Hobbit*), and produced by Blueprint Pictures (*The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, *In Bruges*), the story of Crowhurst's dangerous solo voyage and the struggles he confronted on the epic journey while his family awaited his return is one of the most enduring mysteries of recent times.

## An Introduction

May 2015 saw the start of principal photography in the UK and Malta on **THE MERCY**, the highly anticipated new feature film based on the true story of amateur sailor Donald Crowhurst and his attempt to win the Sunday Times Golden Globe round the world yacht race in 1968. Helmed by Academy Award®-winning director JAMES MARSH (*The Theory of Everything*, *Man on Wire*), Academy Award® and Golden Globe-winner COLIN FIRTH (*Kingsman: The Secret Service*, *The King's Speech*, *A Single Man*) stars as Donald Crowhurst.

Scripted by SCOTT Z. BURNS (*The Bourne Ultimatum*, *Contagion*, *Side Effects*), the stellar support cast includes Academy Award® and Golden Globe Award-winner RACHEL WEISZ (*The Constant Gardener*, *The Bourne Legacy*, *The Deep Blue Sea*) as Donald's wife Clare Crowhurst; DAVID THEWLIS (*Harry Potter*, *The Theory of Everything*) as his press agent Rodney Hallworth; KEN STOTT (*The Hobbit*) as his sponsor Stanley Best, and JONATHAN BAILEY (*Testament of Youth*, *Broadchurch*) as rookie reporter Wheeler.

Produced by Pete Czernin and Graham Broadbent through Blueprint Pictures and Scott Z. Burns, alongside Nicolas Mauvernay and Jacques Perrin of Galatee, the project was developed with Christine Langan from BBC Films and STUDIOCANAL.

**Director James Marsh comments:** "Donald Crowhurst's story is an extraordinary and haunting tale of a man going to sea and the family he leaves behind. Scott has written a beautiful script that gets to the heart of the myth of Crowhurst in a sympathetic and humane way".

## Long Synopsis

**“I am going because I would have no peace if I stayed.”**

**— Donald Crowhurst**

Following on from his Academy Award® winning film *The Theory of Everything*, James Marsh directs the incredible true-story of Donald Crowhurst, an amateur sailor who competed in the 1968 Sunday Times Golden Globe Race in the hope of becoming the quickest person to single-handedly circumnavigate the globe without stopping. With an unfinished boat and his business and home on the line, Donald leaves his wife, CLARE, and their children behind, hesitantly embarking on an adventure on his boat, the Teignmouth Electron.

Not long after his departure, it becomes apparent to Donald that he is drastically unprepared. His initial progress is slow, so Donald begins to fabricate his route. His sudden acceleration doesn't go unnoticed and he soon emerges as a serious contender in the competition. Donald's business partner, STANLEY BEST, had reminded him that he could pull out at any time, however, the consequences to his family from such a decision are unthinkable; Donald has given himself no other choice but to carry on. During his months at sea, Donald encounters bad weather, faulty equipment, structural damage and, the most difficult obstacle of all, solitude.

One by one, his fellow competitors drop out until it is only Donald left to challenge Robin Knox-Johnston, who is first to complete the round trip. As the pressure from what awaits him back home increases, Donald faces his toughest challenge, maintaining his sanity. When he receives word from his press officer, RODNEY HALLWORTH, of the recognition and celebrations awaiting him upon his return, Donald's mind finally breaks.

The Teignmouth Electron is found abandoned off the coast of the Dominican Republic. Donald's scrawled logs are inside, filled with ramblings of truth, knowledge and cosmic beings. Back home, his wife CLARE is left without a husband, his children without a father.

## WHO WAS DONALD CROWHURST?

Donald Crowhurst was born near Delhi in British colonial India in 1932 to John and Alice Crowhurst. At the age of eight he was sent to an Indian boarding school where he would spend nine months of the year. Two years later, his parents moved to Western Pakistan. After the Second World War, aged fourteen, Donald was sent back to England to board at Loughborough College. His parents returned to England in 1947 when India gained Independence from Britain and the Partition took place. His father ploughed all of his retirement savings into an ill-fated business deal in the new territory of Pakistan. The Crowhurst's life in post-war England was a far cry from colonial life. The lack of funds forced Donald to leave Loughborough College at the age of sixteen once he passed his School Certificate, and sadly John Crowhurst died in March 1948.

After starting as an apprentice in electronic engineering at the Royal Aircraft Establishment Technical College in Farnborough, Donald went on to join the RAF in 1953; he learned to fly and was commissioned. He enjoyed the life of a young officer and was described by many as charming, warm, wild, brave and a compulsive risk-taker who defied authority and possessed a madcap sense of humour. After he was asked to leave the RAF, he promptly enlisted in the army, was commissioned and took a course in electronic control equipment. He resigned from the army in 1956 and went on to carry out research work at Reading University aged twenty-four.

Crowhurst is remembered as being quite dashing and he caught the attention of his future wife Clare at a party in Reading in 1957. Clare was from Ireland and had been in England for 3 years. Apparently he told her that she would "marry an impossible man". He said he would never leave her side and took her out the very next evening. Theirs was a romantic, whirlwind courtship that took place over the spring and summer of 1957. They married on 5<sup>th</sup> October and their first son, James was born the following year. It was at this time that Crowhurst began sailing seriously.

He secured a job with an electronics firm called Mullards but left after a year and aged twenty-six, he became Chief Design Engineer with another electronics company in Bridgwater, Somerset. His real dream was to invent his own electronic devices and he would spend hours of his spare time tinkering with wires and transistors creating gadgets. He also found solace in sailing his small, blue, 20-foot boat, *Pot of Gold*.

Crowhurst designed the Navigator, a radio direction-finding device for yachting and set up his company Electron Utilisation to manufacture and market the gadget. Donald and Clare's family expanded with the arrival of Simon in 1960, Roger in 1961 and Rachel in 1962 and they lived happily in the Somerset countryside.

When Electron Utilisation hit financial difficulty, Crowhurst was introduced to Taunton businessman, Stanley Best, who agreed to back the company and Best eventually

sponsored Crowhurst's attempt to circumnavigate the world in the trimaran *Teignmouth Electron*.

With the Empire gone, in 1960s Britain there developed a phenomenon where men sought adventure, recognition and heroism. Sending men to the moon was something Britain couldn't afford, so instead, heroes came in the form of people like Francis Chichester who was the first person to tackle a single-handed circumnavigation of the world, starting and finishing in England with one stop in Sydney. Upon his return in 1967, Chichester was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II and instantly became a national hero.

Capitalising on this wave of interest in individual round the world voyages, The Sunday Times sponsored the Golden Globe race, a non-stop, single-handed round the world yacht race. No qualifications were required for entrants but the rule was that they had to depart between 1<sup>st</sup> June and 31<sup>st</sup> October 1968 in order to pass through the Southern Ocean in summer. The trophy would be awarded to the first person to complete the race unassisted via the old clipper route, of the great Capes: Good Hope, Leeuwin and Horn. The newspaper also offered a cash prize of £5000 for the fastest single-handed navigation.

Nine sailors started the race, four retired before leaving the Atlantic Ocean. Chay Blyth who had no previous sailing experience, retired after passing the Cape of Good Hope. Nigel Tetley was leading the race but sank with 1,100 nautical miles to go. Frenchman Bernard Moitessier rejected the commercial nature of the race, so abandoned it but continued sailing, completing the circumnavigation and carried on half way around the globe again.

Donald Crowhurst's *Teignmouth Electron* was discovered mid-Atlantic, 1,800 miles from England at 7.50am on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1969 by the Royal Mail vessel, Picardy that was en route from London to the Caribbean. On inspection, the trimaran was deserted and a subsequent US Air Force search for Crowhurst followed to no avail.

British sailor Robin Knox-Johnston was the only entrant to complete the race. He was awarded both prizes and subsequently donated his £5000 prize money to Clare Crowhurst and the Crowhurst children.

Director James Marsh carried out painstaking research and delved deep into the heart and soul of what made Donald Crowhurst tick: "If I can speculate on Crowhurst's background and his experience, he seemed to have a series of failures, if you like, and he escaped the failure by rolling the dice bigger on the next adventure. He was a man of enormous energy and charm and that energy and charm led him into decisions like the ones he made in joining the race, for example. He had enormous self-belief as well, and people around him substantiated that. He managed to fund and build that boat, so there's a danger of overlooking what he achieved in this story as well as what he didn't achieve. He achieved enormous amounts".

“He was a fairly inexperienced sailor but he wasn’t as inexperienced as some people think he was. He hadn’t sailed the ocean properly, yet he built this very fast trimaran, but the boat wasn’t fully tested and finished. He made a pretty good go at sailing round the world - he stayed out in the ocean for the best part of seven months so all in all, he achieved much more than people ever thought he could, he just didn’t achieve what his objective was. It was a case of over-reach, it was hubris and that is what caused the tragedy of his demise”, concludes Marsh.

The research materials available on Crowhurst were “endless” says James Marsh, “there are quite a few books out there and great raw materials that he left behind, his logbooks, his diaries and letters he wrote to his wife”.

In the course of the research, Marsh also read a lot about psychology and about isolation, “You can read about what happens to prisoners who are on their own for six months and what that does to their minds. I made a documentary about a chimpanzee and he went mad within three days. There’s something about us as animals that are entirely social”.

Marsh found Crowhurst’s logbooks to be one of the most fascinating elements of research “because they’re the real thing when they’re not the real thing, he’s disguising the real thing. You can perceive the real story through the disguise”.

“I would drive around the country looking at locations listening to Crowhurst’s tapes” recalls Marsh, “He sings on the tapes, mostly sea shanties and he speculates about the state of the world, about politics, about his own life. It’s extraordinary really, some of that is a persona but some of it also is the truth. That’s the great joy of this kind of film - you get a chance to research and the more you know the more you want to know”.

The public persona Donald Crowhurst created through his tape recordings and the way he talks to his family and people on dry land were, according to James Marsh, “increasingly divorced from what he was feeling and experiencing. In our portrayal, he becomes primitive essentially. He’s stripped of civilisation and becomes much more elemental and that’s shown in his physicality, he loses weight, doesn’t wear as many clothes and starts to look like a vagabond on the boat. The mental journey is much more interesting than the physicality and we just had to bring that to the character”.

“There are entries in the logbooks and in the tape recordings that he became aware of the cosmic reality of where he was.” comments Marsh. “No-one behaved rationally after a certain point in that race. Moitessier lost his mind a bit too – he went round again! Robin Knox-Johnston was perhaps the exception but his boat was in a very strange state when he came back to the British coastline. All in all, no-one was spared by this journey”.

“The sea is like a desert. It’s also mercurial, it has moods, it changes, and it threatens you. But, all you’re seeing is a horizon and a sky. The sea changes colour, it can be stormy and it has this sort of personality that can destroy you,” muses Marsh. “The

isolation is a huge part of what goes wrong in Crowhurst's mind. Your brain chemistry changes when you don't speak to people".

When a real-life character is portrayed on screen, there comes a certain responsibility to the memory of the person and to the feelings of loved ones. James Marsh doesn't think there is any 'definitive' version of any true story, "that's the great virtue of true stories, you can interpret them this way or that way, endlessly". He says *The Mercy* is "a version of a story that we think has some truth to it. There's no definitive version apart from the reality of what actually happened. You capture and distil it somehow into a dramatic form or a documentary form. There is a duty to respect that character and to be sympathetic. Colin and I both respect that – we both really liked Crowhurst, we felt we knew enough about him to go on with this story and get to the truth of it. Colin plays him with such sympathy and such careful precise emotional progression, which is totally profound".

"A lot of artists became quite obsessed with Donald Crowhurst" notes Rachel Weisz who plays his wife Clare in *The Mercy*, "I actually think this story is a very loving portrait of him and his ambitions. There's a kind of Donald Crowhurst in all of us, we all dream of some kind of glory. I think in the culture we live in now, we're encouraged to reach beyond our lot or our station. Crowhurst could have made it and it would be a very different story. At the time, there was perhaps this notion that he'd cheated and lied, but I don't really feel the story's about that. It's about somebody who is a dreamer and he gets caught up in a kind of white lie. Everybody exaggerates a little bit now and then to suit his or her story but obviously, this is a very extreme version of it, therefore it makes good drama. I think Donald Crowhurst is immensely human and relatable. He's not a strange, un-understandable being. I think he's very understandable. I think the essence of the film is celebrating him as a kind of romantic hero. I hope his family might feel that too, because that's my feeling about the film" concludes Weisz.

### **Q&A – COLIN FIRTH (Donald Crowhurst)**

**Q: You were attached and committed to the project from very early on. What was it about this film that spoke to you?**

A: You don't have to have been to sea, you don't have to be a sailor, you don't have to be an explorer. You don't even have to have taken on anything particularly extreme in the obvious sense. I think people will recognise what it feels like to go further than you are truly able to, to take on something ambitious, risky and really dare to make a gesture like that in their lives, even if it's just in their relationships. I think they'll also recognise the idea of having rather random things seem to conspire against them. There are very few stories that really deal with that.

The traps that one can get into are so gradual and incremental that you don't see them until they're too big to do anything about. From my own life, that moment I should have turned back, is never something I can identify except in retrospect.

I think when we were looking into this story, all the details, all the preparations, all the things that were going wrong, all the things that conspired against one particular individual, these would be the stories that applied to the heroes that we celebrate. Every time you hear about the guy who reached the top of Everest, the whole space programme or the first man to cross the desert or the ocean, if you study the stories of their preparation there were always things going wrong.

The narrative is interpreted completely differently if it ends happily than if it doesn't and I think sometimes there's a hair's difference between it going one way or the other.

**Q: Did you have an immediate connection with Donald Crowhurst and that duality he felt between his public and private persona?**

A: I think we all have a public and a private persona, perhaps more than that. I think we live in a time where we are all quite obsessed with broadcasting ourselves, in some way or other, through social media. Perhaps that's always been the case, but we now have new tools for doing it. We take photographs of ourselves, we post versions of ourselves and we create profiles of ourselves.

If the profile becomes a big one and in cases where people are very well known and they develop a reputation, whether it's politicians or people in the arts, I think it can become a sort of a burden. I think you can be trapped by your reputation whether it's a good one or a bad one.

In some ways, when I read this story, I felt that was something that would resonate with a lot of people.

**Q: Do you think Donald Crowhurst was fated in some way?**

A: No, I don't think so. Fate, I don't even think it's about that. If you believe in fate you're welcome to look at it through that lens but no, I think it's random. We'd be telling a different story, had one piece of equipment been on the boat, if one day's weather had been different, the business arrangements worked out differently. But it's almost impossible to deconstruct the 'what-ifs'.

There are a lot of random elements. It's a whole other discussion when you look at what makes somebody want to take on something so extraordinarily difficult and dangerous. I reflected on the main differences between me and Donald Crowhurst, his virtues and his strengths. I wouldn't dare do what he did. I wouldn't have the ability to apply myself to a task like that. I wouldn't be able to design that boat, I wouldn't have the mathematical skill, I wouldn't have the sailing skill, and I wouldn't have the knowledge of astronomy and navigation. All the other things could be me and the problems could be ones any of us encounter. I just wouldn't have the resources that he had to get as far as he did and do what he did. It was a most extraordinary thing.

Even to this day, what Crowhurst did is unparalleled because, although people have gone round the world and have endured all sorts, I don't know if it's even possible now to construct a challenge with that sort of adversity. I think it was Robin Knox-Johnston who said 'they were like astronauts'. They were sailing across a frontier, because there was no GPS and the ways of finding you were scant. They had a radio but their communications were rudimentary by today's standards. They were sailing with the same sort of equipment that Captain Cook was using. It hadn't moved on much. It was sextant, barometer, compass, wind vane and your own skills. You could get lost and no-one would be there to rescue you, unless you were very fortunate and someone was within range of your Morse Code.

I'm certainly not saying anything to diminish the extraordinary feats of what people do today, but the idea of that degree of isolation for that length of time, I can't think of how one could parallel it now, because the communications are so comprehensive. I understand that there is some sort of plan to reproduce this race for the anniversary in a couple of years' time, and if they decide they're not going to use GPS but to use precisely the tools and technology that were available in the 1960s, there are still so many satellites up there, you can't really get so completely and utterly lost and out on your own, as you could then.

**Q: It took place at a time in history when men could reinvent themselves and the classes were breaking down. It's perhaps for that reason that Crowhurst's story is such an enduringly fascinating one. Did you ask 'why did he do it?'**

Well, I just had to accept at face value what he said about it himself. But I think that by not accepting the challenge that it would have affected something within him. It makes sense to me. I think he did have the ability to do it. He had more ability than most of us to create the possibility in terms of boat design, in terms of his sailing ability and in terms of his navigational ability. Things just went wrong. There's a very fine line between succeeding and just not succeeding. Nine guys went out on that race and only one actually came home, all for various reasons.

People do take on extraordinarily dangerous things. I can understand why Crowhurst did it. As the famous saying goes, why does anyone undertake these things: "Because it's there." (\*quote from explorer George Leigh Mallory).

**Q: There is obviously a wealth of research material on Crowhurst. Can you talk us through your own research?**

A: I just went through everything that was available. It started with the script, then the documentary *Deep Water* and then the book, *The Strange Last Voyage of Donald Crowhurst* by Tomalin and Hall. The book is an interesting read. Even before I became partial and tendentious in my own views and felt so personally drawn to Donald Crowhurst, the book – which is brilliant journalism and very rigorously written – I felt was unfair on him, in ways that at times it was just to do with the subtlety of inflection. I thought they were uncharitable interpretations. One has to remember it was written very soon after the events, and by the Sunday Times journalists, and I

think there was an agenda, or at least they were writing from a particular point of view. But, it was certainly very, very compelling in terms of information.

There's also the archive footage and there are the tapes that Donald Crowhurst made during his voyage for the BBC. They were fascinating partly because of some of the information he was able to give about daily life. He focussed on his cooking regime, on what he was seeing, on the weather, his problems with his transmitter. He sang a lot - Christmas carols, sea shanties, ballads. He played his mouth organ. Paradoxically, you can feel you're in the company of a man who's completely alone. But they are in some ways much more his public self. I think it was even observed by people who were close to him, that the tapes didn't really quite sound like him.

Then you have the logs, some of which are just ship's log - positions and records of the things you're supposed to put in a ship's log. Some of it was more to do with his thoughts and were very, very rigorous and stark breakdowns of his practical problems - calculating his chance of survival if he went forward as being at best fifty-fifty. There are also very realistic and professional lists of things that needed doing - ones that might have solutions, and ones that couldn't possibly have solutions. You start to see the extent of his problems and the trap he was in through a very hard-headed analysis. I'm an amateur but he lays it out so clearly that you look at it and think, 'No-one could go forward. You have to stop.' But the conditions of stopping were so brutal. That was the kind of pressure, whether it's the pressure of the public eye or whether it's something about, what you've had to summon in yourself to embark on something like that, followed by the solitude and everything you're up against. I don't think any of us can possibly understand that.

I think it's very important to note what Robin Knox-Johnston said specifically about Donald Crowhurst: 'No-one has any right or is in any position to judge unless you've experienced that solitude, unless you've experienced the elements in that way'. In telling this story, it's my hope that it can be distilled into that particular objective. When I read it, it was a feeling that we are in no position to judge and that it's no good for us, or anybody to judge.

It's very interesting to read around and look at the experiences of the other sailors in the same race, because there were sailors who were considerably less experienced than Donald Crowhurst. Chay Blyth hadn't sailed in his life - he went out with an instruction manual and a boat behind him yelling out instructions. He'd rowed across the Atlantic but he hadn't sailed and now he's a legendary sailor. Ridgeway who'd rowed with him, the solitude got the better of him, very early on in the voyage, and he quit. Carozzo was up against similar problems to Donald Crowhurst in that the deadline was looming and he did something that was rather ingeniously strategic, in that he met the deadline by sailing on the day of the deadline, and then he dropped anchor off the coast of the Isle of Wight and spent another two weeks doing what he needed to do, but the stress of it all gave him a stomach ulcer and he had to pull out.

**Q: The truly unique thing about your job is in how close you have to get to a character and how you pour that empathy into it. What's that experience like? Did you hear Crowhurst's voice?**

I literally heard his voice because I listened to the tapes continually. I went into the material continually. Actors have to withhold judgement. It's not our job to judge at all – they even tell you this at drama school. Other people will probably make their own judgements and again it's usually a pretty easy, facile thing to do. As an actor, we have to inhabit and justify a character and there's nothing particularly strange or airy-fairy about that.

As actors, we're just doing it from the inside and to some extent you feel you've walked a mile in someone's shoes. But there's always that sense that you haven't reached it, particularly if you're telling the story of a real character. When the character's fictional you can satisfy yourself, hopefully, that you own it, that you've created something which is much more yours. When the character's real it's partly a privilege or just sheer good fortune and is helpful to have the made material there. If the character's somebody that you're able to meet, you have all that to inspire you and to work off. But to me it's also a reminder that you're not him. It does put you in a very strange and very close relationship.

**Q: There must be a sense of duty as audiences will take this as the definitive account of Donald Crowhurst's story?**

A: Well, there is and it's troubling because of the limitations of fictional filmmaking. You can't scrupulously observe all the facts. You have to mess around with the chronology in order to distil it into its three acts. It's frustrating for all of us but you are still trying to keep it as honest as possible. You hope that in taking a compassionate approach, we'll end up telling the story in a way that engages people's sympathy and understanding, even if it's not claiming to be an exact account of what happened.

My hope is that if a film breaks through, it becomes part of a conversation that will lead people to want to look a little harder. There's a documentary, there's a book and there are different versions of all of this. Even journalism has to take an angle, however impartial it is. Even a photographer who's taking a picture of an event has to stand somewhere. So, in some ways there's no such thing as a completely neutral, three hundred and sixty degree perspective on anything. I just think you've got to do it with as much compassion and as much imagination as you can muster really.

**Q: Let's talk about Crowhurst's actual experience on that boat. There's obviously the very practical, technical side to it, but there's the spiritual experience too. Do you think Don ever got close to being at one with himself?**

A: I think he did. I think he got more than close to it. Just going from what he himself said. We can't guess more than beyond what we have from his own words.

In one of his recordings, he's musing and reflecting on life and some of the more philosophical questions that are associated with everyday life that you wouldn't perhaps have time to do if you were back home, in amongst it all and he was aware that 'Watching the sun go down in the tropics, does lead one to deeper thoughts'. He asks our pardon for rambling on the tape, but these are the sorts of things that occur to him, and this is only what he's saying to the BBC. I think it's inevitable that the parameters of your world would be different, quite literally. You are in a tiny, tiny little space - a forty-foot boat, with a cabin, which is shockingly small. So the cabin is utterly claustrophobic and you're right between that and infinity. So you're experiencing extreme space and lack of space.

What relationships have you got? Human relationships are limited to radio, whether it's BBC World Service, Voice of America, or Morse code communication or the radiotelephone. You are creating a relationship with your environment that means you probably won't be ever quite the same again when you come back. He had books but he didn't take any fiction or any novels. The reading material he did take was Einstein's Theory of Relativity. He took books about sailing and he had his Admiralty charts but the rest of it was about relationships with celestial bodies - the sun, the moon, the stars, the horizon, the light, the wind, obviously the sea, and his own boat. Your boat takes on a persona. The boat becomes a living thing to you.

Solitude, the physical environment, the elements, celestial bodies, whatever marine life, whatever books, whatever bits and pieces you get through the radio, that becomes your entire universe.

One of the last scenes we shot was a moment based on Crowhurst's own recordings where he finds a sea creature, a little fish, in our story it's a Sargassum fish. He describes them as being like little Cornish pasties, which he found absolutely delightful. He tried to keep one as a pet but it died in the bucket that he kept it in. In reality he also developed a relationship with a migratory bird that landed on his ship and he wrote a poem about it called The Misfit. He wrote a rather wonderful piece in his own personal log, describing the bird, and clearly identifying with it in some way, because it wasn't a seabird, it just landed on the boat because the nearest land was a couple of thousand miles away. It sat there for a while and rested and he hoped that the bird would take off in the direction of the closest land but it didn't. He clearly connected with that image. As I understand the character, there's a constant feature of this gentleness and it's in everything he writes. There's compassion and decency and he values reason and honesty. I think it was very important to him for things to be fair and I think that's partly why the trap he got himself into must have been such a turbulent one.

Crowhurst's imagination was probably a big enemy to him. He talked about the noise. He also said 'Everything on the boat's wet. It's not damp. It's dripping in your ear all the time'. You imagine spending a bit of time down in the cabin where it's cosy but when we shot the storm scenes, I went down in the cabin a lot, but I never battened down there for long when we were at sea, because of the waves, the claustrophobia and nausea, you want out of there so quickly. It was horrendous...talk about lying at the bottom of a mineshaft in an earthquake! It's

extraordinary what Crowhurst was made of and that he stayed coherent for as long as he did. He made it to the Falklands and back. I mean most sailors wouldn't dream of a trip like that.

**Q: The endeavour was a peculiarly English thing to do don't you think?**

A: Oh it's very English although it's not exclusively English – the Americans have their own version of having a go but they were going to the moon.

There's a British maritime obsession, with Chichester and Alec Rose and all these guys. It's partly because we're an island, it's partly because of maritime history, and it's partly because we had a bit of a self-esteem problem in the 1960s. We couldn't afford the space programme so all you need is a guy on a boat and we'd prove our mettle.

**Q: Was being out there on the boat in the nothingness a good exercise from a performance viewpoint?**

A: Yes, it was interesting but you're in collaboration. What's quite nice about being the only person in front of the lens is that it brings you quite a lot closer to the work that's going on the other side of the lens. It sometimes became a little bit of a huddle between James Marsh, Eric Gautier (cinematographer) and myself in the decision-making process. You've got one guy with a handheld camera, a director orchestrating things and bouncing the ideas, and then one guy on the other side of that camera so we were feeling our way together, often without dialogue. It was for us to discover.

Then of course we had the elements to deal with and they don't cooperate – when you want bad weather you've got smooth weather. James didn't want to film in tanks, he wanted to film on real sea and we did that. We had to use the tank for a couple of moments, night shoots in the storm but we were out at sea generally. The sea was so still on one particular day it was even stiller than the tank, it might as well have been a swimming pool, which is frustrating because on a day when you want calm of, course it's rocking. A lot of things can conspire against you when you're filming and the number of things that can go wrong when the clock is ticking, that's notorious in the filmmaking process.

When you've got land in the background that you're trying to hide, and something goes wrong with the camera and you've got to do it again but the land's now even more in the background, you can't just say, 'Can we just move the boat back couple of metres and do that again?' You've got to tack back and by the time you've done that, which might take an hour, the light's changed and the wind's changed.

You have to use your imagination and tailor the nature of the scene to the conditions. We did an awful lot of cabin interior stuff in the studio, which was surprisingly claustrophobic. I'd imagined we'd have half a cabin and we'd be shooting from the outside but it was closed in and they'd just make a little hole for

the camera to come in. It was set up so that it could rock violently so we'd actually get home in the evenings with the room still rocking.

**Q: What were your original conversations with James Marsh about what type of film this was going to be?**

A: The script gave us the shape. It doesn't focus on the other people in the race, they don't appear in the film, they just exist in the background and they're reported on, their presence is felt but the film doesn't focus on them directly. It does take us into the family life and it focuses on Rodney Hallworth the press agent who is an important character, as is Stanley Best the sponsor.

I think it's as much about what inspires the desire to do it and what creates the problems before the journey starts. We're probably about half way through the film before the race begins, for Donald. It's every bit as interesting to see the trajectory towards the departure.

**Q: There's a mechanism at work and chain of events that's forcing his hand to embark on the journey when he's not really ready isn't there?**

A: They're his decisions, but often it's about the entanglements that your own decisions create. Then, there are his attempts to solve problems as they go - they're ingenious and there are signs of resolution, determination, resourcefulness and ingenuity. I for one found immense admiration and sympathy for him every step of the way. I could see each problem as it occurred, however trivial it was, it is also rather diabolical - the whole notion of Sod's Law. He made a very sincere attempt to face up to the reality that the race was not going to be practical. He explicitly attempted to pull out - it's mentioned in the documentary. The night before he left he said to Hallworth and Best, 'The boat's not ready.' He knew that but he had to go. They told him he had to go. The contract that he had signed meant forfeiting his house and his business if he didn't go, indeed if he didn't finish either. So he had to set out.

He was persuaded to fix his problems as he went and he might have succeeded in doing that had the piece of tubing been on board that was supposed to pump out the floats that were leaking. Everyone's boats experienced leaks but he had to bail out with a bucket because one item that had been chased down wasn't on board just because of the last-minute rush to get everything ready. There was a pile of important stuff left on the jetty that should have been on the boat and there were things on the boat that he might not have needed. Moitessier was apparently throwing stuff overboard throughout his voyage. We're trying to offer a study of what led up to the day of departure and the traps you get into with a business transaction when someone's giving you a lot of money to help you, what are the conditions? What kind of traps does that put you into?

Then of course there was the press who could be a great tool to use in his favour because that's what brought in sponsorship. But they were an unwieldy instrument. It's not something you control and I think the mythologised version of Donald

Crowhurst that was growing before he left, didn't leave him particularly comfortable, but it was something that his press agent was using to facilitate the whole thing. Before he knew it, stories of his progress were being vastly exaggerated without his having anything to do with it.

**Q: Screenwriter Scott Z. Burns said that he's very aware that in our culture right now there's a kind of a gloating at failure, whether it's the tabloids or social media and that in writing this take on the Crowhurst story, he hopes it to be something of an antidote.**

A: Absolutely, I think this is saying, 'Who are you to judge?' It's a terrible reflex, so I think there's a side of us, when the mob forms in social media or in the comments sections that we're no better than playground bullies. It's a way of distancing ourselves from the spectacle of someone who's been humiliated or who's fallen short of something. There's safety in the numbers of smug people who aren't going through that at the moment. It's a very, very ugly phenomenon.

While I was shooting I read Jon Ronson's book, *So You've Been Publicly Shamed*, where he talks about this phenomenon. It's almost as if social media has revived the old idea of the stocks and the pillory where public humiliation was a part of our legal sanction system. It's quite extraordinary. I mean the slightest gaff now will be punished on such a grand scale. It seems that people aren't satisfied until the person is completely ground into the dust. I hope anything that challenges that reflex is probably a good thing. I think that incredibly facile and unfair judgments have been applied to the Crowhurst story. My hope is that by taking people through it on a personal level and in revealing some of the nuances that people won't be able to do that. When the cast all sat down and read the whole script that was certainly the abiding feeling afterwards. People didn't speak for a few minutes. I think the one thing everybody agreed on was an outpouring of compassion for everybody concerned really in the story and just how dare we judge?

**Q: Rachel Weisz as Clare Crowhurst is a great piece of casting. What does she bring to the performance and how do you see Clare Crowhurst?**

A: Rachel is, as Clare Crowhurst herself is, a fiercely intelligent, insightful and strong person. I think she brings a wryness and an alertness about her that can see the complexities of what Donald wants to do. She's afraid for him and she wishes that he wasn't doing something so dangerous. She believes in him and in his ability to see it through. I don't think she was wrong to believe in that.

Clare was very, very keenly aware that this was something he really needed to do and that not doing it would be as dangerous to him as doing it. I think you need to have a great deal of love for somebody to embrace all that. I can only speculate as far as our interpretation goes but I think that Rachel would probably concur with all that.

**Q: You shot the family scenes before the boat scenes. Did that help establish the close relationship he had with his family?**

A: I think it would have been very difficult if I'd had to shoot the boat stuff before I met anyone who was playing the family. We formed a relationship. You always hope that when you are doing a film about a family that you can form something of a family in the process and we did start to enjoy each other's company. The kids were absolutely great. It helped that they were talented and disciplined, that's not to be taken for granted. But they were just such lovely company, and they seemed to understand what we were all trying to do in a given scene. It was also very important to me in the few scenes we had to stage was to establish a very happy family, a truly wonderful father. The children adored him. He was imaginative and incredibly committed to them. I think in some ways I think his venture was for them as well.

We can very easily pronounce judgement on why a man with a family would take such great risk. Well, people do need to take risks and some of them have families, and I think he believed he could do it, that he would come home, and that it would be a gift to his family, from a financial point of view as well. He hoped to come back as the father he wanted to be to them. A lot of this is me imposing what my motives would be, because I think every time you play a role, to some extent, you want to be that character and the whole story and this setup is as if it were me.

I honestly think that Crowhurst did almost everything with his family in mind.

**Q: What experience of sailing did you have already and what did you have to learn?**

A: I had almost no experience whatsoever. My uncle Robin took me sailing when I was a little boy. The last time I did it, I must have been about eight years old. He came to visit me on the set as he's down in Devon and he still goes out sailing every weekend. That was my connection as he's the same generation as Donald and Clare Crowhurst and he knew all about it.

Obviously there was a bit of a rush to get me acquainted with the basics in order to do this film. I did everything from going out on the boat that we had built for the film, to single-handing on a little catamaran when I was on holiday on an island off the coast of Cambodia and that's when I started to love it. Just being on my own, on a tiny craft, just beginning to get acquainted with your relationship with the wind really. It was a very simple boat, it didn't have a jib, didn't even have a boom. But it did do what boats do in relation to the wind. I understood why, particularly on a tiny little multi-hull for instance, because it struggles into the wind. I learned why it performs very well on a reach. These things were just theory and in some ways if I'd had my first lessons on a big boat with a crew, it might have remained theory. I was only out for an afternoon at a time but it started to make sense to me. Then of course I started to realise how many people I know are truly avid sailors and everything I've just said is real potted beginner's stuff.

If you do sail then this stuff will sound so green and ignorant, and if you don't sail, even the basics sound like some sort of extraordinary foreign language. They were very patient with me, but I had to learn their language and all sorts of little rules. I never had to really single-handedly, meaningfully sail the boat, certainly not without somebody on board, waiting to help out if anything went wrong. But I did, very much enjoy learning the basics in the end. I don't think it's got a future for me though!

**Q: Crowhurst set sail from Teignmouth and you filmed there. The event is in living memory for a lot of people who still live there. How did that feel?**

A: The people were really very lovely down there. We were made to feel extremely welcome. People tolerated a great deal. It's not convenient to have a film crew in your town. There was an awful lot of affection for Donald Crowhurst and for this story. There were older people who told me that they'd known him and were very anxious to share their experiences and their anecdotes. I think his story is now regarded with immense sympathy. Maybe it always was, but we were very struck by how people felt both sympathy and admiration for Donald Crowhurst.

We were treated with nothing but grace and good humour. Devon is the most beautiful county and I think filming in Teignmouth might have been one of the highlights of our shoot really.

**Q: What characterises James Marsh as a director?**

A: He's very bright, he's extraordinarily committed and very collaborative. At times I think we both went down a bit of a rabbit hole, talking through ideas and trying to resolve conflicts in terms of storytelling and what's possible, what's important and what has to be sacrificed. He seemed to welcome that collaboration. I found the partnership with James to be the perfect one for a story like this, really. Once it was just me in front of the camera, it became even more of a kind of nexus that I was very dependent on. It wasn't just the two of us obviously, it was our relationship with not just camera, not just sound, but with the marine guys as well, as they're the experts.

James is very exhilarating company and he's a very exhilarating collaborator. I think it's one thing to have very clear ideas about what you want to do, it's another thing to have that coupled with flexibility because they often exclude each other.

**Q: What was the experience of shooting in Malta like?**

A: Malta obviously suited our needs in so many ways, because they have this extraordinary tank, and the word 'tank' doesn't really tell a story as to what it is. It's a big infinity pool with the sea at the end of it. The effects you can create there are a very dramatic spectacle, where these pumps and water cannons could basically create a storm. It was fantastic for shooting the warmer climes. That's where we shot all the Sargasso Sea stuff and all the summer zone material out at sea. It's a

beautiful island and so basically it's an ideal spot to shoot. If you're shooting on boats, I don't think you could be in a better environment really.

## **THE OTHER KEY CHARACTERS**

### **Clare Crowhurst**

#### **Donald's Wife**

"I think this film is about family", comments Rachel Weisz, who plays Donald Crowhurst's wife, Clare. "Donald, the head of the family is an amateur sailor, an inventor, a dreamer and a fantasist, so when he sees a competition in the Sunday Times offering £5000 to the first man who circumnavigates the earth single-handedly, without stopping, he dreams that he could do this. Chichester had sailed around the world recently, stopping once and he was knighted upon his return and became a hero. It's a story about how boys and men become fixated with becoming heroes".

"I think Donald had a lot of madcap ideas which often didn't get carried out, so at first when Clare hears he's going to enter this race, it's such a preposterous idea to her, because he's not a professional sailor, he's just pottered around. I don't think she believed he would actually do it. Slowly but surely it dawns on her that he's getting closer and closer to actually going and there's a moment where she asks him 'Are you really going to go?' and he says 'yes'".

The question is - could Clare Crowhurst have stopped her husband from embarking on this risky challenge? "Perhaps he would have been stoppable," says Weisz, "but from my viewpoint, it's a portrait of a marriage and a relationship and what would have happened had she stopped him from going? Would he ever have forgiven her? In a relationship, can you stop the other from living out their dreams? In this case, it turns out to be a tragic decision. Clare Crowhurst has said in interviews that she felt retrospectively that she should have stopped him. But, I think in the moment, she didn't feel like she had the right to. She was in an impossible situation."

"It sort of becomes two films, the one at sea, where myself and the children are not there, and then there's the family home, waiting for news of her husband and their father who is becoming a national hero whilst he's at sea. Clare has to deal with the press, with long periods of silence and Christmas and birthdays without him. She also has to deal with having no money to buy food or heat the house without him because Clare depended on Donald for money."

In the course of her research for the film, Rachel Weisz got a sense of Clare from the documentary *Deep Water* and from reading about her, "that she really wasn't interested in being married to someone famous. I sense that she loved him very, very deeply and she didn't want to stop him living out his dreams."

“At that time in history, men were leaving their homes and crossing new frontiers, be it in outer space or circumnavigating the world. So, for Clare, she was happy he was going to be successful as that was going to make him happy” muses Weisz, “I think she was happy if Don was happy.”

When an actor approaches a role where the character being portrayed is real and still alive, there comes a certain responsibility. Rachel Weisz was keen not to do an impersonation of Clare Crowhurst, but to simply convey something of her spirit as she explains, “I think it would be different if one were playing someone already iconic, as everybody would know what they looked like and how they spoke. I’m playing a real person who has been very media-shy. She has not sought fame or publicity, she was never interested in that. I want to honour her. I watched a lot of footage to get an essence of her but at the end of the day, it’s *me* being *her*”.

In telling Donald Crowhurst’s story on the big screen, Rachel Weisz hopes, “We’re celebrating the beauty of being a dreamer, the beauty of thinking big, wanting great things and following one’s passion and one’s heart towards doing something incredible.”

For director James Marsh, the heart of the tragedy and what made the stakes so high, is the fact that the Crowhurst family was such a happy one, “In the archive, you can see what a lovely couple Donald and Clare were together. You sense they were really well connected as a couple and it’s a happy family unit. They sail together and Donald is a very good father and we really wanted to show that in the film. His children all remember him so fondly. He was a good husband and father, and what’s so tragic, part of what he wants to do is to prove to his wife and children that he’s someone special. I think that’s part of the motivation for him.”

“In the archive of the real Clare Crowhurst, she’s a formidable woman and a very good mother and they’re sort of equals as a couple” notes James Marsh. He’d long wanted to work with Rachel Weisz, so when it came to casting the role of Clare Crowhurst, a perfect opportunity presented itself as he explains, “Rachel is great and there’s an interesting physical connection you can make between her and Clare. They don’t look alike but they’re on the same sort of spectrum of humanity if you like, just as Colin and Donald are which is helpful.”

“Rachel is one of those actors who just surprises you and does things you don’t quite expect her to”, recalls Marsh, “that flushes out things in other actors. I loved working with her. She really relies on instinct, she doesn’t really like to do lots of rehearsals or commit to things. Rachel always wants to be loose and to respond. I love that style of work from her.”

Screenwriter Scott Z. Burns feels that for the audience, the voyage Clare goes on is just as important as the voyage Don goes on, “You get the sense that her insight into her husband – both in terms of his need to go and her acceptance of what happened afterwards – is extraordinary, it’s from a place of reluctance to a place of forgiveness.”

"The great thing about Rachel is that she understands the strength of Clare Crowhurst", observes Burns. "Rachel also understands that the moment in history we're talking about, also asked certain things of a woman in terms of being a wife. I think she very quickly understood the journey Clare went on. On one hand she wanted to be loving and nurturing but you also see a very progressive thinker. Most people would be aghast at the prospect of their husband setting off on this kind of adventure, but Clare understood how fundamental it was to his being and that casts a really interesting light on their relationship."

"To me it's a love story", concludes Rachel Weisz, "you don't see them meeting as teenagers, you meet them when they have children and they're settled into their marriage. I think they were passionately in love with each other and Clare's whole life is Donald. She didn't have a job, though I think she wanted to teach amongst other things, and to write. But she was a mum and very devoted to Donald. That's how I perceive her. I guess what makes it so romantic is the fact that they're separated because that's what old school romantic with a capital 'R' means – something that's unattainable, unfulfilled and broken. That's why it's tragic because I think they were yearning for each other while they were separated."

### **Rodney Hallworth** **The Press Agent**

"I remember my parents being quite taken with the story of Sir Francis Chichester in the 1960s when I was a kid, but I didn't know the Crowhurst story" recalls actor David Thewlis who plays Crowhurst's press agent, Rodney Hallworth.

When Thewlis received the script for *The Mercy* from his agent, he was "absolutely fascinated straight away. It was one of the rare occasions where I read it in the morning and rang James Marsh immediately afterwards and said yes. There was no doubt and having worked with James before on *The Theory of Everything*, I knew he was good news. I've had a great time immersing myself in the history of this story. There's lots to research about it and it becomes a little obsessional".

Thewlis devoured the "embarrassment of riches" in the documentary footage, Crowhurst's recordings and the BBC interviews of the time with Rodney Hallworth, "Everyone involved gave extensive interviews so we've all had access to that" shares Thewlis. "We've read all the books and seen all the documentaries and during the shoot in Teignmouth, we met people who remember the actual events. Some of the extras were friends of my character Hallworth and I even had a letter from a gentleman who was more or less the character of Wheeler. It's incredible to have so much information available and the story's really just a compression of all that. There's no exaggeration – there doesn't need to be, it's such an extraordinary tale."

Rodney Hallworth was a larger than life character, a former crime reporter for the Daily Mail, he ended up living in Teignmouth running a local news agency and acting as PR for Teignmouth Council. He offered himself up as Donald Crowhurst's

press agent, "The story takes quite a dark twist with Hallworth" explains Thewlis. "With the role he plays in embellishing what's going on. He's not complicit with what Crowhurst is doing, he actually believes he's going round the world but, he's not receiving enough information from Crowhurst so he starts to get a little creative and exaggerates the speeds and the whereabouts of Crowhurst on the map. This doesn't help the world understand the real story, it doesn't help Crowhurst's family and it doesn't help Crowhurst because Hallworth is reporting it as a certainty that Crowhurst has rounded the tip of Africa. Crowhurst hadn't and therefore this made it increasingly difficult for him to give up and turn back. I think Hallworth was the man who pushed Crowhurst when the boat wasn't ready to go and he was the man who said 'You've got to go, there's too much to lose'".

Thewlis feels "if there's a villain of the piece, it's Hallworth, but it's not as simple as that because he's also an innocent to a degree in that he doesn't know what's really happening."

Crowhurst cites Hallworth many times in his log as being the main person he would be letting down, as well as Stanley Best who was his sponsor. He feels that his wife Clare would be more understanding but Hallworth wouldn't. Portraying Rodney Hallworth allowed David Thewlis to tap into "a kind of Shakespearean clownish element". Hallworth also exhibited dubious, Machiavellian traits, not least when he went aboard the *Teignmouth Electron* in the Dominican Republic, "He entered the cabin and found the logs and discovered the truth. He discovered the rambling, the diaries and the insanity and a very high likelihood of suicide so he ripped out the final two pages of the log, then negotiated the sale of the logs to the Times newspaper, without Clare Crowhurst's permission" explains Thewlis. "Whoever he was, that was not cool. We can forgive him for some of his part in the story, but not for what he did at the end."

The real Rodney Hallworth died in 1985 but Thewlis still felt a responsibility to the character as he explains "We were on the beach filming with some extras who were all men in their 70s who were all very happy to let me know that they knew Rodney and they used to have a drink with him, which kind of freaked me out a little bit and I did suddenly feel very responsible."

Director James Marsh views Hallworth as "an old fashioned Fleet Street hack. He's always got a pint on the go and is often slightly intoxicated". With a background in crime reporting, Marsh notes that he must have "dealt with the really grubby tabloid stuff of the era and he brings some of that mentality to press representation. He's a very cynical man and an opportunist and David Thewlis caught all of those things so beautifully."

Marsh doesn't feel that Hallworth is completely the villain of the piece, "Everyone has their reasons for doing what they do and to be fair to Rodney, he exaggerates Don's story as it's being conveyed to him from the boat. He embellishes it and adds to the lie. He feels cheated and as a tabloid crime reporter, he feels he's been had. So, his anger and indignation are personal but also professional. I can see where he was coming from at the end. He had pathos for Don in his own cynical

way, he felt responsible, as did Stanley Best but they didn't know what they were getting into."

"Rodney is the voice of the future", observes screenwriter Scott Z. Burns, "he's sort of an entry point into reality TV and what we live in now. He was a man of his time and he'd made a promise to the people of Teignmouth, he'd made promises to sponsors, he'd taken up a lot of his own time and invested in this. At one point, he said that it was his job to make Don the most famous man in England and he did that. The way he did it was brutal and insensitive but I can imagine him being in a position where he'd made a commitment to someone who had lied to him so he acted in his own best interest. I don't think Rodney was an evil man by nature, I think he was a practical man who had invested in something and he wanted to make good on his investment."

### **Stanley Best** **The Sponsor**

Stanley Best was a shrewd, successful businessman who'd made his money as a caravan dealer in the coastal town of Teignmouth, Devon.

Ken Scott portrays Best in *The Mercy* and weighs him up as "A very ordinary man of no distinction who grabbed the opportunity to be part of something quite splendid. The relationship with Donald Crowhurst was friendly. Stanley Best liked him very much. It seems that Crowhurst was the kind of man anybody could like because he was charismatic."

Stott says that it's worth noting "Stanley Best didn't do anything just for the hell of it. He wasn't a big risk taker. He liked things to be neatly sewn up. That contributed greatly to what could be considered a modern Greek tragedy in its immensity".

"It would have been acceptable for Crowhurst to come home but the pressure was on him and Stanley Best put that pressure on him, somewhat unwittingly I'm sure. I do believe Best blamed himself in many ways but the family reassured him, that they didn't hold him in any way responsible."

"What makes this story so touching is Crowhurst's love of his family", observes Stott, "and it's that love for his family that put him into such jeopardy. The irony is the tragedy. It is a painfully beautiful story."

## **FROM SCRIPT TO SCREEN**

### **Scott Z. Burns' original vision to James Marsh's realization**

Acclaimed director James Marsh comes from a documentary filmmaking background and was responsible for *Man on Wire*, winner of the 2008 Best Documentary Feature at the Academy Awards®. His multi award-winning feature, *The Theory of Everything* explored the early life of physicist Stephen Hawking, so Marsh is no stranger to real life characters being portrayed on film and it is indeed something he responds to “because it offers the opportunity to carry out detailed research, which deepens your understanding of the story”.

“Crowhurst's is a real story, a true story, but it's definitely a mythical story of the sea and it sort of seeped into the culture as an example of British amateur sailor over-reaching” comments Marsh. “The idea of ‘hubris-nemesis’ is built into the story. I saw the documentary *Deep Water* about ten years ago and it fleshes out the imprint you have. It's an absolutely fascinating and compelling narrative. It's literally classical Greek tragedy. A man has an ambition and ambition doesn't end up ennobling him, it ends up corrupting him, and tragedy then ensues. It has a very classic tragic shape.”

Marsh received the screenplay from acclaimed American screenwriter Scott Z. Burns, “He's a great writer and being American, his perspective was very interesting. He took this very archetypal English story and was very detached from his point of view, so was able to cut through some of the baggage of the story and distil it into something really, really strong and compelling to read. It had a very interesting perspective on the unravelling of a human mind, which is again, part of this story. I was won over by the script and really wanted to do the film”, recalls Marsh.

“For me, it's always a positive if the story is true” admits Marsh, “it just gives you a sure foundation if people made these choices and you've to understand their story in a dramatic context. They're real choices and you have to reckon with those and there's something more persuasive about that than some fictional stories. There are always turning points that you look for in a true story as it gives you a larger insight into the human psychology and you can be constantly surprised by the choices people make. In our era, a true story seems to be one that people increasingly respond to. It's a very interesting time for a filmmaker like me who has a background in documentary and also wants to make dramatic film, as the barriers are just breaking down”.

“I'd never really understood the term, ‘Truth is stranger than fiction’ until I saw the documentary *Deep Water*” admits producer Pete Czernin. “We were incredibly lucky to have such an amazing and very clever screenwriter in Scott who knew about and had pursued the story over the years. You have to decide what sort of story you're going to tell, especially in this instance where what Crowhurst did was so incredible and brave, flawed and interesting, so you need to strike the right

balance. A lot of work went into this screenplay to get the tone right. James Marsh also had a sort of forensic intelligence and was exactly the right director for us because of his documentary background. He also has a real passion for telling real life stories. *The Theory of Everything* was so truthful, interesting and unusual, we were genuinely excited when James became interested in *The Mercy*. As I hoped he would, he immersed himself in all the source material and became really passionate. It was an absolute blessing that James came on board."

"A lot has been written about Donald Crowhurst and I wanted to get as close as we possibly could to telling the authentic story", explains Czernin. "Some people have been of the opinion that he cheated and he did this or that wrong but I disagree, I think he was immensely heroic. He found himself in a peculiarly difficult situation and he explored a way to get out of it. I don't think he in any way set out to do what he did. He was heroic and brave. Having the notion in the first place, entering the race, designing the boat, building the boat, raising the money – that's a pretty impressive guy. I love the idea of a man trying to do something that may or may not be beyond his reach. That makes for a very human, fantastic story."

Colin Firth had already expressed interest in portraying Donald Crowhurst before James Marsh boarded the project. "I thought it was just too good to be true, I was thrilled", recalls Marsh. "As an actor, Colin invites sympathy and I thought he would be the perfect person to take us on this very dark journey. The story starts very optimistically and ends in a state of madness. It's a real challenge for an actor to plot and understand that journey and to do it so utterly persuasively and convincingly. When I realised Colin was involved, it just made me more excited about the project. He has huge talent and experience but he also had personal engagement with the story and a commitment to it that was all consuming. There was technical preparation and psychological preparation and what he had to do was extraordinarily difficult. It's a sort of psychological version of what Eddie Redmayne did in my last film, *The Theory of Everything*. Colin was able to bring out the pathos in a man losing his mind. The reasons why Crowhurst unravels are very forgivable – isolation, lack of communication with his loved ones, the pressure of what he was doing, the deception and the guilt. Colin and I both saw a lot of ourselves in Crowhurst, for good and for bad. There was a mutual interest and solidarity with the character. It was a very rewarding and harmonious collaboration."

James Marsh and Colin Firth were both in agreement about the story they were telling and they had a shared passion and desire to bring Crowhurst's story to the big screen. "We're telling the story of a man who, in a sense, wants to have the recognition that he doesn't have in life. He strives for that by doing something very brave and very foolhardy" comments Marsh. "That venture and objective destroys him".

Screenwriter Scott Z. Burns first became aware of the Crowhurst story through the documentary *Deep Water*, "I saw it at a very small theatre in LA and it was one of those stories I identified with in a lot of ways and I knew I had to tell this one. There

were a lot of books around and because of the nature of Don's voyage and the support of the BBC, there was newsreel footage, logs and tape".

Burns was aware of the conflicting stories and the differing conclusions people came to about Donald Crowhurst, his motivations and his demise. He explains his own motivations, "I wanted to write about the fact that all of us find ourselves in situations where we've compromised ourselves inadvertently, sometimes even by virtue of having the best intentions and I wanted to try to show some compassion for that. I wanted to write Don as a character that was sympathetic because at the end of the story, I feel that way towards him in spite of what he does."

There was never any suggestion of a Hollywood ending for *The Mercy*, Burns "Wanted to show a man who makes a bunch of choices and ends up paying the price. I hope people can identify with the situation Don gets himself in then maybe we'll have more compassion for each other. I hope the way Clare Crowhurst is portrayed in the movie is instructive in some ways, so we can approach each other and the people we love with a little more generosity and a little less expectation. I took from Clare, the notion that when you love somebody, you don't just get to love the good parts, you have to accept the fact that there are bad parts. I think that's what she tried to convey to her children."

During the writing process, Burns reflected extensively on ways that Crowhurst could have solved his dilemma, but he says, "What's important to remember is that Don didn't have the luxury of what you, or I or the audience can do, which is talk to another person. You can get caught in your own head and feel as though these are your only solutions. Events conspired against him. The fact that a coastguard officer in Argentina chose not to make the phone call exposing Don is extraordinary. When you spend years writing the script, you begin to wonder why he didn't capsize his boat and radio for help. Yet, if you read Moitessier's book, you learn that sailors love their boats and that relationship they have after nine months at sea, is not one they'd willingly give up."

## **THE LOOK AND FEEL**

James Marsh returned to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now* as points of reference from literature for *The Mercy*, "Herzog's *Aguirre*, *Wrath of God* felt like an interesting film to watch because it's about people going mad on a boat and Polanski's *Knife in the Water* is also an interesting film about the psychology of space on a boat. You look for clues how other great filmmakers have shot in that kind of space. Coppola's way of shooting was very different from Polanski's. *Heart of Darkness* is a key text for this film or any film about going to sea and civilisation falling away from people and what they become without other people around."

The palette for the film was visualized quite quickly as production designer Jon Henson recalls, "We used lots of organic blues and colours of the sea. That might sound kind of obvious but using that as a background colour, we dropped in lots of strong colours. Eric our cinematographer found these amazing Capa colour

photographs – they're quite unusual and had a real quality to them and that really led the look of the film, as well as the grade. That seeded many thoughts and we laid colours from those palettes into the house as well as the boat."

Keen not to slip into a clichéd 1960s look, Henson wanted to create a naturalistic, simple world that the audience could believe in, "That's probably been our hardest challenge funnily enough", admits Henson. "With the Crowhurst's family house, we started to look at wallpapers, colours and 1960s references and they're not all psychedelic bright colours. The Crowhursts were unpretentious, unselfconscious people living a simple life so that's what we've tried to create. My memories of being a child at that time also helped, just small things really that I tried to layer into the film."

One key consideration for Henson was James Marsh and Eric Gautier's desire to create 360 degree sets, even on the boat, "So that gives it an almost documentary style. We dressed the house completely and the garden so we could feel free to move around in it for two whole weeks. Being able to shoot throughout the house and travel through it brought a particular energy to it."

### **CONSTRUCTING THE TRIMARAN TEIGNMOUTH ELECTRON**

Jim Dines, an accomplished British boat builder, is one of the few people in the UK specialising in boat design and build for the film industry. He and his team created the replica *Teignmouth Electron*. After accessing the original drawings from a museum in the United States, and as many photographic references he could muster, Dines came up with a drawing and boat design: "We specialise in building boats that can be dismantled, transported and put back together and still work as a boat rather than being part of a set build."

Dines was given the challenge of building the boat in twelve weeks, on a budget and it had to be transportable by road. The replica *Teignmouth Electron* is fully functional and was built to sail, although "It's got limitations" says Dines, "because it unbolts down the middle of each hull and divides into three pieces. You can take the two outside hulls off the centre hull and get it on a lorry. It had to be under seven feet and six inches in order to transport it by road to Malta."

Constructed in Dines' boat yard in Maldon, Essex, "We then took it apart, moved it outside the shed and put it back together again so the filmmakers could see it all finished off with the mast and the sails on. We then we took it apart, loaded it onto a lorry and took it down to Portland in Dorset and rebuilt it again, launched it and towed it about 90 miles across Lyme Bay to film in Teignmouth. Then we towed it back to Portland, filmed in Portland, took it apart and put it on two low-loaders and shipped it down to Genoa in Italy, then it went on a three-day ferry ride from Genoa to Malta. We put it back together in a dock in the north of the island, filmed for a couple of weeks, took it apart again and stored it in Malta for a month before returning in September 2015 to put it back together for the fourth time to complete filming in the tank in Malta."

The boat used in the film is as faithful as it possibly can be to Crowhurst's original *Teignmouth Electron*. Cox's Marine Ltd of Brightlingsea, Essex, built the three hulls of Crowhurst's trimaran then L.J. Eastwood Ltd of Brundall in Norfolk assembled the hulls and completed the fit-out on the boat. Time was of the essence as Crowhurst had a 31<sup>st</sup> October deadline to set sail, so it was for this reason that the construction was split between the two boat builders as Cox were unable to complete everything in time, hence they sub-contracted to Eastwoods.

The actual name Teignmouth Electron was coined because of Rodney Hallworth's role as public relations officer for Teignmouth, as well as being Crowhurst's press agent. The Electron part of the name is from Electron Utilization, Crowhurst's company.

Jim Dines constructed the hull of the film replica to the same size and specification but used plywood for the frame "Because we cut it out in the CNC machine just to speed the process up. We eventually got some of the original drawings so we know our sizes were right, apart from stretching the cockpit a little bit to accommodate filming" explains Dines. "The seats are slightly smaller than they would be but the actual space underneath is slightly bigger so you can get in and out and that meant I could lie down in the floor of the cockpit while Colin was sailing the boat and I could just steer with my finger, looking up the mast and see where the wind vane was. When we were actually sailing at sea, rather than being in the tank, we could drive the boat and hide in the bottom of the cockpit so you're out of shot. The original cockpit would have been too small to do that, so there were a couple of little tweaks we've made to make it work for filming."

Crowhurst wanted to base his trimaran on those of American trimaran pioneer, Arthur Piver, "He was designing all sorts of different trimaran hulls at that time" notes Jim Dines, "then there was another guy at the time called Warren who was doing very similar catamaran hulls which were all easy to build – the kind you can do in your back garden as long as you can get it out of the gate. If Crowhurst had finished some of the stuff he was working on, it could have been pretty innovative, like his self-righting systems that he never actually quite got to work. There was a lot of technology he was trying to put on the boat and I think if he'd had more preparation time and money, he could have been in a better state, mentally and structurally before he left."

"A trimaran wouldn't have been my choice if I was doing it, I'd choose something, larger, a steel hull, probably mono-hull. But yeah, trimarans are fast, that's the thing Crowhurst was looking at" notes Dines. "We've sailed that boat ten or twelve knots and it does fly for a boat with a very small rig in it. Whereas a mono-hull you're probably looking at seven, eight knots, so you'd think at the time, if you can get the thing round the world safely without it flipping over or falling apart, it would have been fast. Nigel Tetley had exactly the same hull form as Crowhurst, with a slightly bigger rig. Tetley would have done it in a much better time than Knox-Johnston but in the last couple of weeks he pushed the boat so hard that the boat broke and his boat wasn't built for that trip. Crowhurst on the other hand, strengthened up his hulls,

took the big cabin off the top and changed the way the boat joins up with the crossbeams, he increased the size of those and things like that, whereas Tetley just had a standard off the shelf boat."

"I think the *Teignmouth Electron* was capable, so if Crowhurst had been better prepared he would have done it and it would have worked. He just didn't have everything on board that he needed, stuff was taken off that he thought was on board. The boat was very well built apart from the problems with the glass fibre which they put on with the wrong paint because they couldn't get hold of it, and this was something Crowhurst had been dwelling on. In his head, right from the beginning, he was never as prepared as he should have been."

"I hope the film portrays a man who tried to achieve something and do the right thing. I don't think he went out foolhardy, he was just put up against it on time. Back in those days, people went off and did these things. It was a sort of boys' own adventure thing. Chichester did it the year before, only stopping once, so the idea of doing it and not stopping at all was an adventure" concludes Dines.

## **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION**

Teignmouth is an early 19<sup>th</sup> century seaside resort in Devon, England and became one of the most significant locations for filming *The Mercy*, as it was where Donald Crowhurst set sail from at 4.52pm on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1968.

Much of the older generation of Teignmouth vividly recall the day Crowhurst departed on his fateful journey. It was a big event in a small town. Lots of people remembered Crowhurst being around the town, preparing his boat in the weeks leading up to the trip. Half the town showed up to help the unit with the production and to feature as extras in the departure. "We felt very welcome in Teignmouth, people were happy to have us there" notes director James Marsh. "We closed down a lot of roads and owned the beach for two days but there was never a problem. There was a general sense of local support because it was a folk memory imprinted into the town. It was great to shoot exactly where Crowhurst had walked. There's archive material showing it hasn't changed very much either which was helpful to us."

"I've not met anyone in Teignmouth who condemned Crowhurst or judged him harshly" notes Marsh, "because he paid the price, as did his family. His demise was so pitiful and full of pathos, it would be hard to judge him and condemn him on the back of that."

The biggest challenge for location manager Camilla Stephenson was working out the logistics for one of the key elements – filming a man on a boat, as she explains "We were under the mastership of Daren Bailey our marine co-ordinator, but the second big consideration was that that it's a period film - late 1960s. We needed to be outdoors as much as possible on land as well as being out on the water."

One of the first conversations Stephenson had with director James Marsh was about where they would shoot the Teignmouth scenes, "I looked at Teignmouth and all over Devon but it was evident from the start that Teignmouth itself worked as a location as we could reveal a lot of it. Often with period films you're caught in little corners of a location because behind you or to the side of you is completely wrong period-wise."

The story evokes the image of a small town and it was important to portray that feeling of the people and community who have invested in Donald Crowhurst, "Visually it's small enough so that you realise the sort of pressure he'd have been under if he pulled out. He couldn't come back and face them all. He'd have felt too humiliated. I don't think Donald Crowhurst sought fame, he sought respect from the community and his own family" comments Stephenson.

"There's something universal in the idea that a small town or community can pin its hopes on somebody. That person becomes the mascot of the people and the keeper of their dreams" suggests screenwriter Scott Z. Burns. "When you're writing, you're trying to find the specifics so that took a lot of digging and a lot of research and understanding Rodney Hallworth's relationship with Teignmouth. Previously he tried to sell the idea that Teignmouth was the sunniest place in England. The people were looking for an identity, just as Don was looking for an identity."

Camilla Stephenson and her team started setting up logistics in Teignmouth from January 2015, with filming commencing in May so they really got a taste of the place and met many individuals who had personal recollections of the Crowhurst story and the historic departure in 1968, "I got us into the yacht club quite early on and by chance a group of older men were having coffee and they all had an opinion on Crowhurst because they'd either met or heard of him. The story really divides people, some are very sympathetic and others regard him as a cheat. Modern day Teignmouth is very positive and they're proud to have a film about him being made in the town. When we filmed Crowhurst's departure with the mayor officiating on the beach, the man who played the mayor is the son of the actual mayor from 1968."

The importance of the Crowhurst's family home was another major consideration when it came to location scouting. James Marsh and production designer Jon Henson knew that it needed to feel like a real family home and that the audience should get a strong sense of a tight-knit, loving family who all enjoyed being together in their home, "We wanted to show that they didn't spend their money on a trendy, high-end life, but that they were very much a middle-class family, who really cared about each other. We wanted the home to show a lot about Donald Crowhurst as a person, a husband and a father, as well as showing you a lot about Clare his wife and his children, and that makes it all the more poignant" notes Camilla Stephenson.

On a practical level, Stephenson needed to find a house big enough for the unit to film in for two weeks, "We initially thought the interior of the house would have to be a set build in a studio but on our first visit to Devon with James and our

cinematographer Eric, it became evident that they really wanted to be able to look out of the windows for real". The house she finally found was actually close to Leatherhead in Surrey and it was here that the intimate scenes between Donald and Clare Crowhurst were shot, as well as depictions of family life, Donald tinkering, inventing and plotting in his garden workshop, and winter snow scenes with the Crowhurst children that included snow effects filmed on one of the hottest summer days of 2015.

The logistics of shooting out at sea both in the UK and Malta were a constant challenge. During the UK shoot, aside from shooting Crowhurst's departure from Teignmouth, production moved to Portland in Dorset where the unit battled weather, tides and long hours out at sea.

Producer Pete Czernin admits that every other producer he spoke to said, "Don't go near the sea". Malta posed its own challenges because of the heat and length of the shooting day out at sea and "endless problems with the horizon and seeing the land, with other boats passing so you've got to make sure you're far enough out at sea". "On top of that we were shooting on film so magazines would run out while we were out there so we had all the logistics associated with that but I think Portland and Weymouth was the biggest challenge because of the wind, changing weather and waves. Then there's the fact that the crew need to eat and go to the loo. It was kind of bonkers and very difficult. I don't think I'll make another film on the water in a hurry" confirms Czernin.

In Malta, numbers were limited to eight people on the crew catamaran, when normally you would have around 30 shooting crew. The camera department were on a separate boat, as were hair and make-up there was a main boat for director James Marsh, a safety boat, three or four ribs, then a runner boat. When you're shooting an eight or ten-hour day, three or four miles offshore everything the crew requires has to be on hand, hence the need for the 'mothership' as it became known. This large motorboat had amongst other things, essentials like toilet facilities and drinking water. "You can see why a lot of people don't want to film at sea" says Jim Dines, "but you do get such a better image, the movement and the whole thing feels much more real".

When asked what his thoughts were on filming at sea again, director James Marsh responded quite simply by saying, "Well, just not to do it again because it's a foolhardy thing to do in a way. I can see why people want to shoot films in the controlled environment of a tank where you can very easily control the movement of the boat. But, the actual motion of the boat and the experience of shooting with Colin on the boat was so important to the texture of the film."

Marsh worked with French cinematographer Eric Gautier who was also insistent on shooting it for real on the ocean. "The experience is more like a documentary because it's a minimal unit and Colin. It made the collaboration with Colin so interesting because there were no other actors involved. It wasn't easy. You're stuck out there so you get a small sense of what Crowhurst went through, but it's an amateur's vicarious thrill compared to what he was doing", concludes Marsh.

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

### **The Cast**

#### **COLIN FIRTH**

##### ***Donald Crowhurst***

A classically trained British theatre actor, Academy Award® winner Colin Firth is a veteran of film, television and theatre, with an impressive body of work spanning over three decades. He has appeared in three films that have won the Academy Award® for Best Picture: *The King's Speech*, *Shakespeare in Love* and *The English Patient*. Colin's performance as King George VI in *The King's Speech* garnered him an Academy Award® as well as a Golden Globe Award, Screen Actors Guild Award, British Independent Film Award, Critics' Choice Award and his second consecutive BAFTA Award in 2011. Colin also won the BAFTA Award in 2010 and the Volpi Cup for Best Actor at the 2009 Venice Film Festival for his performance in Tom Ford's *A Single Man*.

In 2008, Colin starred in Universal Pictures' global smash hit *Mamma Mia!* The film grossed over half a billion dollars around the world and is the highest grossing film of all time in the UK. He also starred in the Universal/Working Title hit film series *Bridget Jones' Diary* and in the Universal hit *Love Actually*, written and directed by Richard Curtis. At the time of its release, *Love Actually* broke box office records as the highest grossing British romantic comedy opening of all time in the UK and Ireland, and was the largest opening in the history of Working Title Films.

In 2012 Colin was seen in Tomas Alfredson's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* opposite Gary Oldman and Tom Hardy. The thriller is based on John Le Carré's Cold War spy novel. The film garnered three Academy Award® nominations including 'Best Writing' and won the 2012 BAFTA Film Award for 'Outstanding British Film' and 'Best Adapted Screenplay.'

In 2013 Colin appeared in *The Railway Man* directed by Jonathan Teplitzky, which also stars Nicole Kidman and Jeremy Irvine. The film is based on a true story of Eric Lomax, played by Colin, who sets out to find those responsible for his torture during his time as a prisoner in World War II.

In 2014 he was seen in Woody Allen's *Magic in the Moonlight*, in which he stars opposite Emma Stone. The same year he starred in *Kingsman: The Secret Service*, directed by Matthew Vaughn and based on the acclaimed comic book of the same name in which Colin plays the role of a secret agent who recruits and trains an unrefined but promising street kid into the agency's competitive training program. The cast includes Samuel L Jackson, Michael Caine and Taron Edgerton. Filming is currently underway on the sequel. He recently completed *Eye in the Sky*,

produced and distributed by Colin's production company, Raindog Films, with partner Ged Doherty, and has also recently reprised his role as Mark Darcy in *Bridget Jones' Baby*.

Colin will next be seen in *Genius*, a chronicle of Max Perkins's time as the book editor at Scribner, where he oversaw works by Thomas Wolfe, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. The film premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival and stars Nicole Kidman, Jude Law, Guy Pearce, and Vanessa Kirby.

His others film credits include the Academy Award®-nominated *Girl With a Pearl Earring*, *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, *Devil's Knot*, *Arthur Newman*, *Then She Found Me*, *When Did You Last See Your Father?*, *Easy Virtue*, Michael Winterbottom's *Genova*, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Atom Egoyan's *Where the Truth Lies*, Marc Evans' thriller *Trauma*, *Nanny McPhee*, *What a Girl Wants*, *A Thousand Acres*, *Apartment Zero*, *My Life So Far*, *Fever Pitch*, *Circle of Friends*, *Playmaker* and the title role in Milos Forman's *Valmont* opposite Annette Bening.

On the small screen, Colin is infamous for his breakout role in as Mr. Darcy in the BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, for which he received a BAFTA nomination for Best Actor and the National Television Award for Most Popular Actor.

In March 2004, Colin hosted NBC's Saturday Night Live. He was nominated for an Emmy Award in 2001 for Outstanding Supporting Actor in the critically acclaimed HBO film *Conspiracy* and also received the Royal Television Society Best Actor Award and a BAFTA nomination for his performance in *Tumbledown*. His other television credits include BBC television movie *Born Equal*, *Donovan Quick*, *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd*, *Deep Blue Sea*, *Hostages* and the mini-series *Nostromo*.

His London stage debut was in the West End production of *Another Country* playing Guy Bennett. He was then chosen to play the character Judd in the 1984 film adaptation opposite Rupert Everett.

Colin is an active supporter of Oxfam International, an organization dedicated to fighting poverty and related injustice around the world. He was honored with the Humanitarian Award by BAFTA/LA at their 2009 Britannia Awards. In 2008 The Hollywood Reporter named him Philanthropist of the Year and prior to this, in 2006, Colin was voted European Campaigner of the Year by the EU.

## **RACHEL WEISZ** **Clare Crowhurst**

Academy Award®-winning actress Rachel Weisz, who is known for portraying women of incredible spirit and intelligence, continues to seek out challenging projects and roles both on screen and on stage.

Weisz's numerous upcoming projects from globally acclaimed filmmakers include: *My Cousin Rachel*, directed by Roger Michell, *Denial*, directed by Mick Jackson and starring opposite Andrew Scott, Timothy Spall and Tom Wilkinson, *Complete*

*Unknown*, directed by Joshua Marston opposite Michael Shannon, Kathy Bates and Danny Glover, and, Derek Cianfrance's *The Light Between the Oceans* which co-stars Michael Fassbender and Alicia Vikander.

Weisz serves as producer on a number of upcoming projects including *Radiator*, a darkly comic examination of family life, marriage, age and love, directed by Tom Browne.

Weisz was most recently seen in Paolo Sorrentino's *Youth* alongside Michael Caine, Jane Fonda and Harvey Keitel as well as Yorgos Lanthimos's 2015 Cannes Jury Prize winner, *The Lobster*, opposite Colin Farrell. Both films premiered at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival, and screened at the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival and the 2015 London Film Festival.

In the Fall of 2016 she will star in the off-Broadway production of The Public Theater's *Plenty*, with David Leveaux directing Weisz in the lead role of this drama set in the years following World War II.

Receiving unanimous critical praise opposite Ralph Fiennes, in 2005 Weisz earned a Screen Actors Guild Award, Golden Globe Award and the Academy Award® for Best Supporting Actress for her performance in Fernando Meirelles' film adaptation of the best-selling John le Carre novel, *The Constant Gardener*. Similarly, in 2012 she received a Golden Globe Best Actress in a Motion Picture Drama nomination for her highly acclaimed performance in Terence Davies' *The Deep Blue Sea*, a film adaptation of Terrence Rattigan's play. Her performance in this independent film also earned her Best Actress awards from The New York Film Critics Circle, and the Toronto Film Critics Association.

Weisz's diverse work includes Alejandro Amenabar's ancient Egyptian epic *Agora*, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival, Rian Johnson's international con man adventure *The Brothers Bloom* opposite Mark Ruffalo and Adrien Brody, Wong Kar Wei's *My Blueberry Nights*, Peter Jackson's *The Lovely Bones*, Adam Brooks' romantic comedy *Definitely Maybe*, and the indie political drama *The Whistleblower*, directed by Larysa Kondracki, for which Weisz received strong praise. Weisz also starred in Jim Sheridan's thriller *Dream House* opposite Daniel Craig, Francis Lawrence's hit thriller *Constantine*, Darren Aronofsky's sci-fi/romantic fantasy adventure *The Fountain* opposite Hugh Jackman, Gary Fleder's *Runaway Jury*, James Foley's *Confidence*, Chris and Paul Weitz's *About a Boy*, Jean-Jacques Annaud's *Enemy at the Gates*, Michael Winterbottom's *I Want You*, David Leland's *The Land Girls*, Beeban Kidron's *Swept from the Sea*, Bernardo Bertolucci's *Stealing Beauty* and David Hare's *Page Eight* alongside Bill Nighy and Ralph Fiennes for the BBC.

Weisz has also appeared in a number of blockbuster films including Stephen Sommers' *The Mummy* and *The Mummy Returns*, Tony Gilroy's *The Bourne Legacy*, opposite Jeremy Renner and most recently Sam Raimi's *Oz: The Great and Powerful* opposite James Franco and Michelle Williams.

Weisz starred on Broadway in Mike Nichols' *Betrayal* opposite Daniel Craig and Rafe

Spall, which broke weekly box office records in previews at The Barrymore Theater. In 2010, Weisz won the Laurence Olivier Award in the category of Best Actress for her performance as Blanche DuBois in the West End revival of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Weisz received critical acclaim for Focus Features' *The Shape of Things*, which also marked her first venture into producing. She had previously starred in writer/director Neil LaBute's staging of his original play of the same name, in both London and New York City. Her performance in Sean Mathias' UK staging of Noel Coward's *Design for Living* garnered her the London Drama Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Newcomer. She also starred in the West End production of *Suddenly Last Summer*, directed by Mathias.

Weisz began her career as a student at Cambridge University where she formed the Talking Tongues Theatre Group, which performed numerous experimental pieces and won the prestigious Guardian Award at the Edinburgh Festival.

## **DAVID THEWLIS**

### ***Rodney Hallworth***

An accomplished and acclaimed actor, writer and director, David Thewlis' distinguished career has spanned more than thirty years. Known to international audience for his enchanting portrayal of *Remus Lupin* in the *Harry Potter* franchise, David was widely acclaimed for his unforgettable, award-winning performance as rambling street philosopher *Johnny* in Mike Leigh's *Naked*.

Lately, he took on the title lead as The Inspector in the BBC adaptation of JB Priestley's classic, *An Inspector Calls* directed by Aisling Walsh. Other recent big screen roles range from Charlie Kaufman's colourful animation *Anomalisa*; Justin Kurzel's new take on *Macbeth* where David plays *King Duncan* alongside Michael Fassbender and Marion Cotillard; Alejandro Amenábar's psychological thriller *Regression* with Emma Watson and Ethan Hawke and Working Title's Kray twins gangster thriller *Legend* directed by Brian Helgeland and starring Tom Hardy, Taron Egerton and Emily Browning.

Other highlights have included Terrence Malick's *New World*, Roland Emmerich's *Anonymous*, Steven Spielberg's *War Horse*, Luc Besson's *The Lady*, Dean Parisot's *Red 2*, Terry Gilliam's *Zero Theorem*, Bill Cordon's *The Fifth Estate*, John Boorman's final feature film of his career *Queen & Country* and the Academy Award®, BAFTA, Golden Globe-winning Stephen Hawking biopic *The Theory of Everything* directed by James Marsh for Working Titles Films with Eddie Redmayne and Felicity Jones.

## **KEN STOTT**

### ***Stanley Best***

Ken Stott is a BAFTA award-winning actor who is perhaps best-known for his role as the title lead in Ian Rankin's colourful detective series *Rebus*; as well as his role as *Balin* in Warner Bros. 3D epic franchise, *The Hobbit*.

He has recently completed a leading role in Woody Allen's next feature; and stars in the new adaptation of *An Inspector Calls*, a one-off BBC TV special for director Aisling Walsh. Prior to he starred in Jim O'Hanlon feature, *A Hundred Streets* alongside Idris Elba.

He also starred in BBC One and Starz' 8-part drama *The Missing*; and Simon Pegg's feature, *Man Up*.

Other career highlights include *Charlie Wilson's War*, *Casanova*, *Spivs*, *The Runaway* and the critically acclaimed *Hancock & Joan*.

## **JONATHAN BAILEY**

### ***Wheeler***

Serena Davies from the Telegraph dubbed Jonathan Bailey an "impressive up and comer" on hearing of his casting in the role of rookie reporter *Wheeler*. Best known for playing *Oliver Stevens* in the hugely successful crime drama series *Broadchurch*, alongside David Tennant and Olivia Colman, the first series won Best Drama Series at the 2014 BAFTA TV Awards and has garnered a further 17 award wins and 15 nominations.

He took on the role of *Herod* in an adaptation of Anne Rice's novel *The Young Messiah* alongside Sean Bean and Christian McKay; and last year he played *Geoffrey Thurlow* in Lionsgate's adaptation of Vera Brittain's iconic and powerful WWI memoir *Testament of Youth*.

Recent highlights also include BBC2's series *W1A*, the follow-up to multi-BAFTA-winning comedy series, *TwentyTwelve*, featuring Hugh Bonneville and Jessica Hynes. He made a guest appearance in episode five of *Doctor Who* as *Psi*; and is also known as the title lead in the children's adventure series *Leonardo*. Jonathan's other television credits include *Some Girls*, *Me & Mrs Jones*, Disney's *Groove High* and the Channel 4 comedy *Campus*.

Stage roles have included *Cassius* in *Othello* at The National Theatre alongside Rory Kinnear. The play received excellent reviews, with Jonathan cited by Tim Walker of The Telegraph as 'an improbably glamorous and superficial Cassio'. *Othello* was nominated for Best Revival at the Olivier Awards. He was also seen in *American Psycho* at the Almeida Theatre, which was also highly commended. His other theatre credits include *Les Miserables*, *Christmas Carol* and *Girl With a Pearl Earring*.

In 2012 he was nominated for the Milton Shulman Award for Outstanding Newcomer at The 2012 Evening Standard Theatre Awards for his performance in David Hare's *South Downs*.

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

### **The Filmmakers**

#### **JAMES MARSH**

##### **Director**

James Marsh is a director of both documentary and narrative feature films. His last film *The Theory of Everything* saw Eddie Redmayne win an Academy Award®, a Golden Globe, and a BAFTA for his lead performance as Stephen Hawking. The film also won a BAFTA for Best Film and was nominated for an Academy Award® for Best Motion Picture, it went on to win 25 awards and nominated for 114 awards.

Previously, Marsh directed feature film *Shadow Dancer*, a conspiracy thriller set in Northern Ireland and starring Clive Owen. It premiered at Sundance in 2012 and was also a selected entry at the Berlin Film Festival. The film won both the Jury Prize and Audience award at the Dinard Festival of British Film. It was theatrically released around the world in the summer of 2012.

Marsh's most recent documentary film *Project Nim*, won the Best Director award (World Documentary) at Sundance 2011, The Director's Guild of America Award in 2012, was nominated for a BAFTA in 2012, and was short listed for an Academy Award® in 2013.

Prior to that, Marsh directed the dramatic film *Red Riding:1980* for Channel 4. The film was theatrically released in the US by IFC in 2010 and was a selected entry at the Telluride, New York and AFI film festivals.

Marsh's documentary *Man On Wire* won a total of 31 major awards around the world, including an Academy Award® for Best Documentary, a BAFTA and an Independent Spirit award. Marsh's earlier work includes the feature film *The King* (Un Certain Regard, Cannes 2005) which he both wrote and directed and the documentary hybrid *Wisconsin Death Trip* (Venice, Telluride, San Sebastian 1999). *Wisconsin Death Trip* won a BAFTA and was short-listed for an Academy Award®.

Marsh has also directed commercial campaigns for Audi, Coca Cola (Radical Media/Weiden & Kennedy), and the BBC (Red Bee).

Born in Truro, he grew up in Cornwall and London, England. He now lives between London and Copenhagen with his wife and two daughters.

## **PETE CZERNIN AND GRAHAM BROADBENT (BLUEPRINT PICTURES)**

### **Producers**

Producers Graham Broadbent and Pete Czernin founded Blueprint Pictures in 2005. 2015 saw the release of *The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, a follow up to their 2012 BAFTA and Golden Globe nominated hit *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, starring Judi Dench, Maggie Smith, Bill Nighy & Dev Patel, and directed by Academy Award® nominee John Madden (*Shakespeare in Love*). Between them, the two films have taken over \$230m at the box office.

In 2008 Blueprint produced Martin McDonagh's Academy Award® nominated and BAFTA Award winning film *In Bruges*, starring Colin Farrell, Brendan Gleeson and Ralph Fiennes. Blueprint teamed up again with McDonagh on his second feature *Seven Psychopaths*, which starred Colin Farrell, Woody Harrelson and Sam Rockwell, which was nominated for Best British Film at the 2013 BAFTA Awards.

Other Blueprint productions include *The Riot Club*, directed by Lone Scherfig and adapted by Laura Wade from her hit play *Posh; Now Is Good*, adapted by Ol Parker from Jenny Downham's novel *Before I Die*; and *Becoming Jane*, starring Anne Hathaway and James McAvoy. Blueprint's first television drama, *The Outcast*, was shown on BBC1 in 2015. Sadie Jones adapted the screenplay from her award-winning novel of the same name.

On Jan 12th 2018 Blueprint will release *THREE BILLBOARDS OUTSIDE EBBING, MISSOURI*, starring Frances McDormand, Woody Harrelson, Sam Rockwell and Peter Dinklage. This is Blueprint's third collaboration with Martin McDonagh after the Academy Award®, BAFTA and Golden Globe-nominated *IN BRUGES* and BAFTA-nominated *SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS*. They are currently in post-production on Mike Newell's *THE GUERNSEY LITERARY AND POTATO PEEL PIE SOCIETY*, starring Lily James, Penelope Wilton, Tom Courtney, and Michiel Huisman, which will be released in 2018. Blueprint Television is currently in production on *A VERY ENGLISH SCANDAL* starring Hugh Grant and Ben Whishaw and directed by Stephen Frears which will also air in 2018.

## **SCOTT Z. BURNS**

### **Writer/Producer**

SCOTT Z. BURNS is a screenwriter, director and producer. His film credits include the original screenplay for *Side Effects*, directed by Steven Soderbergh (starring Jude Law, Rooney Mara, and Catherine Zeta-Jones), *Contagion* directed by Steven Soderbergh, (starring Matt Damon, Kate Winslet, Marion Cotillard, and Jude Law), as well as the screen adaptation of Soderbergh's *The Informant!* Burns also co-wrote the BAFTA-nominated *Bourne Ultimatum* and was a producer on the Academy Award®-winning documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*.

He wrote and directed HBO Films' *PU-239*, produced by Soderbergh and George Clooney. In addition, Burns' stage play *The Library*, directed by Soderbergh, appeared at The Public Theater in New York City in 2014 starring Chloe Grace Moretz and it was nominated by the Outer Critics Circle for Best New American Play. Burns is currently writing/producing an adaptation of *The Burglary* by Washington Post reporter Betty Medsger.

## **ERIC GAUTIER**

### **Cinematographer**

Award-winning French cinematographer Eric Gautier is best-known to international audiences for his work on Sean Penn's *Into the Wild*, Walter Salles' *The Motorcycle Diaries* for which Gautier was BAFTA-nominated and Ang Lee's *Taking Woodstock*.

With more than sixty major credits to his name, other highlights in his long and distinguished career include, Patrice Chereau's *Intimacy* for which Gautier was nominated for European Cinematographer at the 2001 European Film Awards, *Paris je t'aime*, *A Guide to Recognizing Your Saints*, *Esther Khan* and *Pola X*.

He received the French Lumiere award in the Best Technical Achievement category for *Into the Wild*, as well as an Independent Spirit Award in 2005 for *The Motorcycle Diaries*. He was awarded the prestigious French Cesar for *Ceux qui m'aiment prendront le train* in 1999 and was Cesar-nominated for *Les herbes folles*, *Un conte de Noel*, *Coeurs*, *Gabrielle*, *Clean* and *Les destinees sentimentales*.

Recent credits include Cameron Crowe's *Aloha* and the documentary *Hitchcock/Truffaut*.

## **JON HENSON**

### **Production Designer**

British born production designer Jon Henson inaugurated his career with Arnaud Desplechin's *Palme d'Or* winning film *Esther Kahn* in 2000. This project paved the way for many exciting feature films and TV movies in the years to come.

In 2005 he designed *Brothers of the Head* produced by Potboiler and directed by

Keith Fulton and Louis Pep. In 2006, Jon gained an RTS Award for *Macbeth*, which established him in both the British and international film industry. Jon then worked on John Crowley's *Boy A* (2007), which was the most successful feature film at BAFTA 2008, winning *Best Director*, *Best Actor*, *Best Photography and Lighting* and *Best Editing*. Following that, he designed *Last Chance Harvey* (2008) starring Dustin Hoffman and Emma Thompson, who were subsequently nominated for *Best Performance* at the Golden Globes in 2009. Jon then moved on to work on Hideo Nakata's Thriller *Chatroom* (2010), Nick Murphy's *the Awakening* (2011) and in the same year Justin Chadwick's, *Stolen*.

*Shadow Dancer* followed in 2013, directed by the Academy Award® winning James Marsh and in the same year he worked with Ruairi Robinson on *The Last Days on Mars*, which was part of 2013 Cannes Official Selection. He then went on to design *The Thirteenth Tale* for Heyday Films, which was helmed by James Kent. He subsequently designed *Testament of Youth*, which premiered at the London Film Festival and Alicia Vikander was nominated for a BIFA in the *Best Actress* category for her performance. His latest project is *Criminal* directed by Ariel Vromen.

## **LOUISE STJERNSWARD** **Costume Designer**

Louise Stjernsward's prolific feature film credits as a costume designer include Bernardo Bertolucci's *Stealing Beauty* and *The Dreamers*, Jeremy Thomas's *All The Little Animals*, Jonathan Glazer's multi-award winning *Sexy Beast*, Asif Kapadia's BAFTA award-winning feature film debut *The Warrior*, Richard Loncraine's *Wimbledon*, and Oliver Parker's *I Really Hate My Job* and *Fade to Black* and *Made in Dagenham*, directed by Nigel Cole for which she was BAFTA-nominated.

She is perhaps best known for her work on *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* in 2012 and the follow-up, *The Second Best Marigold Hotel* in 2015.

Her television credits include *The Outcast* for BBC One and her work has also been seen in a host of commercials and short films.

## **MARESE LANGAN** **Hair & Make-up Designer**

Marese Langan studied her craft at what is now called the Delamar Academy in London and then worked on various student films at the UK's National Film and Television School in Beaconsfield

After graduating from Beaconsfield she went on to work as a make-up and hair artist on several independent British films, including Peter Cattaneo's *The Full Monty*, Mike Leigh's *Career Girls*, and Udayan Prasad's *My Son the Fanatic*, as well as big-budget major studio movies including Wolfgang Peterson's *Troy*, Gore Verbinski's *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*; Ridley Scott's *Kingdom of Heaven* and

Best Picture Academy Award® winner *Gladiator*.

Marese's first credit as a make-up and hair designer was on *Gloriana*, the International Emmy Award-winning telefilm directed by Phyllida Lloyd, with whom she would later re-team on *The Iron Lady*, which earned her a BAFTA Film Award.

Marese has been chief make-up and hair designer on films as diverse as Michael Winterbottom's *Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story* and *A Mighty Heart*; Andrea Arnold's *Fish Tank*, starring Katie Jarvis and Michael Fassbender; Mark Herman's *The Boy in Striped Pyjamas*; Armando Iannucci's *In the Loop*; Hidea Nakata's *Chatroom*; Amma Asante's *Belle*; A Monster Calls for J.A. Boyana, two Kevin Macdonald films *How I Live Now* and *Black Sea* and two films with Erin Creevy, *Welcome to the Punch* and *Autobahn*. Marese is currently working on *Denial* for Director Mick Jackson.

## **JINX GODFREY**

### **Editor**

BAFTA-nominated for *The Theory of Everything*, Jinx Godfrey is a long-time collaborator with director James Marsh. Godfrey also received an American Cinema Editor's award and the Cinema Eye Honors Award for *Man on Wire*.

Other production highlights include, *How I Live Now*, *Shadow Dancer*, *Page Eight*, *Project Nim*, *Margot*, *Red Riding: In the Year of Our Lord 1980*, *Gnome*, *The King*, *The Team*, *Blond in Hollywood*, *Arena*, *Mr Rock & Roll: Colonel Tom Parker*, *Wisconsin Death Trip*, *The Challenge: The Making of Charlotte Church*, *John Cale*, *Into the Blue* and *Van Gogh's Ear*.