



# YES

Production Notes

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**GREENESTREET FILMS  
AND  
UK FILM COUNCIL  
PRESENT**

**AN  
ADVENTURE PICTURES  
PRODUCTION**

**IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
STUDIO FIERBERG**

**A FILM BY  
SALLY POTTER**

**Y E S**

**Written and directed by  
SALLY POTTER**

**Produced by  
CHRISTOPHER SHEPPARD  
ANDREW FIERBERG**

**Executive Producers  
JOHN PENOTTI  
PAUL TRIJBITS  
FISHER STEVENS  
CEDRIC JEANSON**

**JOAN ALLEN**

**SIMON ABKARIAN**

**SAM NEILL**

**SHIRLEY HENDERSON  
SHEILA HANCOCK**

**SAMANTHA BOND  
STEPHANIE LEONIDAS**

**GARY LEWIS  
WIL JOHNSON  
RAYMOND WARING**

**Director of Photography  
ALEXEI RODIONOV**

**Editor  
DANIEL GODDARD**

**Production Design  
CARLOS CONTI**

**Costume Design  
JACQUELINE DURRAN**

**Sound  
JEAN-PAUL MUGEL  
VINCENT TULLI**

**Casting  
IRENE LAMB**

**Line Producer  
NICK LAWS**

## **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

YES is the story of a passionate love affair between an American woman (Joan Allen) and a Middle-Eastern man (Simon Abkarian) in which they confront some of the greatest conflicts of our generation – religious, political and sexual. Sam Neill plays the betrayed and betraying politician husband and Shirley Henderson a philosophical cleaner who witnesses the trail of dirt and heartbreak the lovers leave behind them, as they embark on a journey that takes them from London and Belfast to Beirut and Havana.

## **LONG SYNOPSIS**

The film begins in London in the present day. A cleaner (Shirley Henderson) sets the scene as she removes some stained sheets from a marital bed whilst ruminating wryly on the nature of dirt. A woman rushes angrily through the room. “She” (Joan Allen) is an American scientist of Northern-Irish descent - a molecular biologist, a woman of distinction and achievement. She flies high; constantly on the move, circling the globe: conferences, commissions. Because she grew up in a divided country she understands holy and civil war; but at home - the immaculate white house we first see her in - she lives also in her own private battleground; a marriage that has broken down beyond repair. Her betraying English husband (Sam Neill) is in politics. They try to keep up an appearance of togetherness for the sake of his career. She feels like an exile in her own home.

That night, at a banquet, she meets a man, who sees her grief and makes her laugh. “He” (Simon Abkarian) is Lebanese; he was once a doctor, but had to escape from Beirut and now works as a cook. Where he once picked shrapnel out of people’s bodies and cut their flesh to save their lives, now he cuts the flesh of animals. He cuts it well. He cooks it well. But the memory of war is never far away. His work-mates in the noisy kitchens (Gary Lewis, Wil Johnson, Raymond Waring) taunt him about his background and his beliefs. He lives alone in a small flat, an exile from his culture, his family and his homeland.

They begin a passionate affair that starts sweetly as a sanctuary for each of them, and gradually pushes them to the limits of who and what they are and challenges all their assumptions: about sexuality and surrender, about morality and ethics, about God and about love.

World events start to cast a long shadow over their intimacy. Eventually he decides to end the affair when he finds he can no longer tolerate the imbalance of worldly power in their relationship; the secrecy, the claustrophobia of her need (which at first excited him) nor the challenge that the affair poses to his identity. His belief in God, and in the world he left behind, begins to surface once more, and now seems a higher calling than the call of love and sex. All that first attracted him to this blonde American professional woman now reminds him only of his humiliation and loss.

He pushes her away at the very moment that her marriage seems to have broken down irretrievably, increasing her sense of isolation. The sexual and spiritual affinity she had found in her snatched moments with this man suddenly seem like more than just an illicit affair. The relationship seems to have become the most important part of her life. They have a blazing argument in which, for the first time, he seems to have all the power in his hands – the power to say “no”. But as he rejects her, the deeper reasons for his anger and anguish gradually emerge; the pain and humiliation he experiences every day as a man from the Middle-East living in the West.

In the middle of their night-long argument in an echoing car-park, the woman is called away to her beloved aunt (Sheila Hancock), who lies comatose in a nursing home in Belfast. The aunt is an atheist and socialist whose dying regret is that she never visited Cuba. When the aunt eventually dies, the woman telephones her lover to try to persuade him to travel with her to Havana and give their relationship a last chance. But he has returned to Beirut – for the first time in over a decade – to attend the baptism of the first-born son of an old friend.

It seems that everything is over. Their world has split in two. With nothing left to lose, the woman leaves for Havana. In the eyes of those who know her - her husband, her closest female friend (Samantha Bond), and her god-daughter (Stephanie Leonidas), for whom she is a mentor and role model - she seems to have vanished.

Will her lover join her in Cuba or have their differences finally made a life together an impossibility? The tragedy of their separation becomes the sweetest of sorrows; absence brings them closer and closer. Can “No” ever become “Yes”?

## **ABOUT THE FILM by Sally Potter**

I started writing YES in the days following the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 in New York City. I felt an urgent need to respond to the rapid demonisation of the Arabic world in the West and to the parallel wave of hatred against America.

I asked myself the question: so what can a filmmaker do in such an atmosphere of hate and fear? What are the stories that need to be told? Instinctively I turned to love and to verse (and to humour). Love, because it is ultimately a stronger force than hate; and verse, because its deep rhythms and its long tradition (from medieval sonnets to Icelandic sagas to rap) enable ideas to be expressed in lyrical ways that might otherwise be indigestible, abstract or depersonalised. (And humour, because in the face of such heavy global hysteria, the need for levity becomes stronger than ever.) And, whereas a documentary can explore the underlying historical and political issues, a work of fiction needs to venture into emotional terrain; the experiences we have in common, whatever our differences.

So I began writing an argument between two lovers, one a man from the Middle East (the Lebanon), the other a woman from the West (an Irish/American) at a point where their love affair has become an explosive war-zone, with the differences in their backgrounds starting to overshadow them as individuals. My job was to create two characters who are contradictory, complex, and sympathetic, with both strengths and weaknesses. I wanted to draw portraits that flow against the tide of cliché (particularly the stereotypes of the enemy 'over there' and the potential 'enemies within' – the exiles, immigrants and asylum-seekers living in the west. For this reason, also, the man's religion is left deliberately ambiguous.)

The argument between the two lovers came out onto the page, for the most part, in iambic pentameter (ten syllables per line). Perhaps my background as a lyricist made me write this way; as if the film was a song. Or perhaps it was an instinctive attempt to let the characters speak to each other on screen about things which are hard to express in normal conversation. Either way, I tried to find a form in which the characters could speak to each other from somewhere intimate and surprising in themselves.

The argument became a sequence which was then made, experimentally, as a five-minute short film. Excited by its possibilities I then decided to develop the two characters, their storyline, and

the mosaic of lives around them, into a feature-length script. The sub-plots would include the woman's husband, a betrayed and betraying English politician; their god-daughter, a withdrawn teenager trying to grow up in a beauty and celebrity-obsessed culture; three kitchen hands, each battling with their beliefs and prejudices in the midst of the noise and confusion of the workplace; the heroine's aunt, trying to make sense of her life as it ebbs away; and a cleaner, functioning as a one-woman chorus who sees and hears it all. Each character would be caught in a different kind of solitude, each trying to reach out to those around them, each one trying to be heard.

In the screenplay the verse is like a river running through the film as we delve into the characters' thought-streams and back out into their speech. I had learnt from the five-minute film that the actors delivered the verse best, paradoxically, when they ignored it; when they spoke concentrating on the meaning, rather than the rhymes, as if the text was just a heightened form of ordinary speech. (For this reason many viewers of the film don't really notice its rhymes or its metre.)

The war in Iraq began as we began rehearsals; with Joan Allen and Simon Abkarian heading a fine, committed cast. Lines from the script became more and more pertinent, as the characters' journey accelerated. We all felt we were working on something urgently contemporary. During the working process we discussed the usual details of design, light and lens, or character and costume. But we also talked passionately about the deeper themes of the film; the struggle to understand each other (East and West, Christian and Muslim); the desire to respect each other's differences and to find a way of living side by side.

As world events overtook the story we had to cancel our shoot in Beirut (the war had made us un-insurable) and Joan Allen, an American citizen, could no longer work in Cuba (thanks to a new Bush administration decree). It took some fancy footwork to overcome these problems.

That the film was made at all is testimony to the ingenuity of the producers, Christopher Sheppard and Andrew Fierberg, and the dedication and generosity of the cast, crew, and facility houses who invested in the film with their unpaid labour or deferred fees to make it possible. It was truly a labour of love. Everyone wanted to contribute to a 'yes' in the face of the destruction and despair of war.

All thanks are due also to GreeneStreet Films who were excited enough by the project to decide to finance the film along with The UK Film Council, in times when risk-taking in cinema is increasingly rare.

### **P.S. SOME FURTHER NOTES ABOUT THE FILM by Sally Potter**

How can I describe YES? Is it a love story? It is certainly romantic, but it is also quite definitely political. And it is also funny, though you couldn't really call it a comedy.

It does have a plot (a love story) that respects the classic principle that there must be an obstacle to the lovers' union. She is married – but adultery is commonplace these days, so that would hardly count as an obstacle. What is less common is that the love affair is between an American woman and a Middle-Eastern man, so the obstacle is both cultural and political.

But perhaps what is most unusual is the way the story is told: the lovers (and all the other characters in the film) speak to each other in verse. However, just as the film is not really 'about' its plot, neither is it a film 'about' poetry. (The direction to the actors was to respect the meaning of the words but to ignore the rhymes. The metre was to function as an invisible 'holding structure': present if you know about it, but not designed to be read self-consciously, or even to be heard, except subliminally.)

So where does that leave us? Trying to describe or analyse your own film is always difficult. The energy has all gone into making it (building it up); trying to write about it sometimes feels like pulling it down (taking it apart). In thinking about how to provide some useful words for this press-kit I found myself reading a letter by John Berger (novelist and screenwriter). He is thanked in the credits at the end of the film, not only for having read several drafts of the script whilst it was in development, but also for the inspiration he provides as a writer of political sensibility and integrity who also takes risks with form. After the first private screening of the completed film this is what he wrote:

*"The film is about the rhyming of contradictions. The verse confirms this in a way I hadn't foreseen. The places, the locations, are like characters too. The cleaner makes us realise this – and the camera moves all the while around and in and through these places with the same caring curiosity as she has. She's like the camera-woman. If the places are characters, what is scene?"*

*The arena of world politics today is the scene – and above it the sky to which everyone, at one moment or another, prays.“*

In another part of the letter he referred to the structure of the narration and his experience of how it worked for him:

*“The narration of YES proceeds, again and again, through glances to denouements (nakedness). This procedure applies to every character – to those in the background of the story and to those in front. And this stitching-and-finally-unfurling-narration derives, first, from the way each person is portrayed. And, then, it is picked up by the camera movements and the music. The nakednesses are always surprising. (As they are in life when the one looking is attentive. Dress renders us similar, nakedness renders each of us incomparable.)”*

So, perhaps the film is about becoming naked – the human commonality beyond (behind? inside?) our cultural and political differences. It is also about the very small and the very large; from the micro world of molecular science, and the dirt observed by the cleaner; to the enormity of war; the giant clash of fundamentalisms, eastern and western.

And in between those two worlds – somewhere on the middle of the scale of the very small to the very large – lies the human body with its' desires, frailties, strengths, and, ultimately, mortality.

## **ABOUT THE CAST by Sally Potter**

**Simon Abkarian** was my first and only choice to play the part of 'He'. An immensely talented stage actor (mostly in Paris) with a charismatic screen presence, he is of Armenian and Lebanese extraction, and identified strongly with the character and with the themes of the film. Some of the scenes are inspired by stories he told me.

I had long admired **Joan Allen's** serious, intelligent performances. When Simon and Joan worked together for the first time, the chemistry between them (and their mutual respect) was immediately evident. Joan brought a radiant and vulnerable quality to her role and both actors constantly sought truthfulness in their performances. They became the most committed, dedicated, generous collaborators I could ever have hoped for.

**Sam Neill** tackled the difficult role of a disillusioned English politician (Joan Allen's husband in the story) with great goodwill and subtlety, and helped create a sympathetic presence with enormous skill.

**Shirley Henderson**, as the cleaner (a sort of one-woman chorus, commenting on the protagonists and seeing what they cannot see) brought her uniquely ironic, delicate, and sometimes extremely funny presence to her role as a woman contemplating the trail of dirt and heartbreak that we leave for others to clean up in the house and on the planet.

The kitchen men (**Gary Lewis, Wil Johnson** and **Raymond Waring**) launched into their arguments with gusto. Their characters (as with all the characters in the film) are trying to figure out what they really believe – about God, politics, asylum seekers, women, sex, and America – and they give voice to prejudice and to confusion (in verse, of course). They were a joy to work with.

The great **Sheila Hancock** (playing the aunt), as well as bearing an uncanny physical resemblance to Joan Allen, appears late in the story and gives voice to ruminations about the end of Communism as she reaches the end of her life; (a sequence that had many of us in tears as we filmed it, and inspired a stunning performance from Joan Allen).

**Stephanie Leonidas** (luminous as a confused teenager) and **Samantha Bond** (as her mother) complete the strong ensemble cast.

## **ABOUT THE CREW**

YES brought together several key crewmembers that have worked with Sally Potter on previous films. Alexei Rodionov (director of photography) is reunited on YES with Sally Potter for the first time since the acclaimed ORLANDO (1992). Carlos Conti (production designer) and Jean-Paul Mugel (sound recordist) had previously both worked on THE TANGO LESSON and THE MAN WHO CRIED. Walter Donohue (story editor), Irene Lamb (casting), Penny Eyles (script supervisor) and Fred Frith (musician) had previously contributed their own distinct talents to all of the last three of Sally's previous films.

Sally Potter's comments on the vital contributions of her crew follow:

### Alexei Rodionov (director of photography)

It was a joy to work with Alexei once again. He displayed a willingness to adapt to difficult conditions that is characteristically Russian. In many of the sequences in London, for example, for budgetary reasons Alexei was operating the camera, setting his own lights, and acting as his own grip. His instinctive camera work and constant search for the right frame for the scene and the subject, gives his work a unique vitality and depth. He managed to find and create light with minimal resources and the beauty of his portrait lighting is staggering. I admired his hand-held work in particular, but it is his overall eye that I love; along with his perfectionist capacity for hard dedicated work. He and his team (including steadicam operator Eric Bialas) achieved beautiful results with a gracious, generous attitude, a willingness to experiment (for example with camera speeds, particularly the use of 6 frames per second) and a capacity to withstand heat and exhaustion towards the end of the shoot in Cuba.

### Carlos Conti (production designer)

One of the great film designers, Carlos is nevertheless a man who is not above the humblest of tasks – from painting the wall to sweeping the set – if that will help achieve the necessary result. His design work goes beyond sets and objects to an engagement with the total look of the film. We search for locations together, always laughing, always looking for ways to understand and develop the image. In this film he worked miracles with a very small art department budget to create a strong look where each location became a 'character' in the story.

### Jean-Paul Mugel (sound mixer)

This is my third collaboration with Jean-Paul who is, without doubt, peerless in his ability to record direct sound beautifully in very difficult, sometimes extremely noisy conditions. His presence on the set is a creative one: he listens in the deepest sense – not just to the voices but to what they are saying; to what the film itself is saying. He contributes energetically as well as qualitatively to the final result.

### Vincent Tulli (supervising sound editor)

As a sound-recordist himself, Vincent is ferociously creative in guarding direct sound (sound recorded during the shoot rather than dubbed afterwards). Together with Anne Delacour's immaculate dialogue editing, and his own musical ear, he proved to be a dynamic re-recording sound mixer, working for the most part from his ProTools laptop in the mixing studio.

### Jacqueline Durran (costume designer)

Jacqueline's inventiveness and sensitivity both to character and to colour made her a delight to work with. In particular, the 'look' she created for Joan Allen (somewhere in the lineage of Hitchcock's blonde heroines) helped give her character some unexpected references. As all heads of department on this film, Jacqueline put a huge amount of energy and hands-on work into realising the design.

### Daniel Goddard (editor)

This was my first collaboration with Daniel, whose work on LOVE IS THE DEVIL I had particularly admired. He brought a patient, sober eye to the material and proved to be an astute and inventive editor. We worked closely for six months and his experience in video technology proved very helpful in finding new ways to tell the story.

### Digimages (digital blowup)

YES was filmed on super-16mm (with some video inserts). The challenging transition to 35mm was expertly and creatively handled by Digimages in Paris (a dedicated team led by Tommaso Vergallo) and their work contributed significantly to the final look of the film.

### Christopher Sheppard and Andrew Fierberg (Producers)

YES is my fourth film with Christopher Sheppard as producer. For this production we enlisted the help and collaboration of Andy Fierberg, known for his experience and expertise with cutting-edge low-budget independent filmmaking, mostly in New York.

Hands-on producing is the least understood, most invisible of all aspects of filmmaking and tends to be a thankless task. The producer works ceaselessly on all aspects of organisation, budget and schedule to create an infrastructure that makes everyone else's work possible. In this instance the challenges faced by the producers were even greater than usual from both budgetary and logistical points of view. (Not least because of the war which began as we went into rehearsals.) Christopher and Andy worked with enormous skill, flexibility and ingenuity to ensure that I could realise my vision of the film and that each member of the cast and crew could function to their optimum within the resources available.

The sheer number of hours they worked (and the volume of paperwork) before, during and after the shoot is astounding. First to arrive and last to leave, their specific skills, experience and dedication combined to extraordinary result. What they achieved is, in my view, close to miraculous. They are the hidden heroes of this production and I wish to thank them.

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I am extremely grateful to the crew: to those heads of department mentioned above and also to the unsung labours of others, particularly those in the production office, who worked so hard behind the scenes. Low-budget filming now depends more than ever on the talent, willingness, and dedication of these people behind the camera.

## **ABOUT THE MUSIC**

The score for YES includes the music of Philip Glass (played by the Brazilian group Uakti), Gustavo Santaolalla (21 GRAMS), Kronos Quartet (with Café Tacuba) and Eric Clapton and BB King (which Sam Neill plays 'air guitar' to in the film).

A remarkable arrangement of the Cuban classic 'El Carretero' by Venezuelan Gonzalo Grau integrates the Armenian instrument, the duduk, for the first time in a salsa.

An arrangement by Sally Potter and Fred Frith of 'Fawn', a haunting piece by Tom Waits and Kathleen Brennan, plays over the end-sequence on the beach.

Further original music by Sally Potter (including for the end credits) was made with the participation of long-term collaborator, the celebrated guitarist and improviser Fred Frith, who has played on Sally's last four films.

## **CAST BIOGRAPHIES**

### **JOAN ALLEN (“SHE”)**

A founding member of the vaunted Steppenwolf Theatre Company, and recipient of one Tony award and three Academy Award nominations, and a further nine film and theatre critics awards, Joan Allen has had a remarkable career on both stage and screen. The first of Joan Allen’s Academy nominations was in recognition of her portrayal of First Lady Pat Nixon in Oliver Stone’s NIXON (1995). The following year she received a second Oscar nomination for her role as Elizabeth Proctor in Nicholas Hytner’s adaptation of THE CRUCIBLE. In 1997 she headlined a stellar cast in Ang Lee’s acclaimed THE ICE STORM. In 2001 she received her third Academy Award nomination for her leading role in THE CONTENDER.

Selected feature film credits:

THE BOURNE SUPREMACY (2004), dir. Paul Greengrass  
OFF THE MAP (2003), dir. Campbell Scott  
THE CONTENDER (2000), dir. Rod Lurie  
WHEN THE SKY FALLS (2000), dir. John Mackenzie  
PLEASANTVILLE (1998), dir. Gary Ross  
FACE/OFF (1997), dir. John Woo  
THE ICE STORM (1997), dir. Ang Lee  
THE CRUCIBLE (1996), dir. Nicholas Hytner  
NIXON (1995), dir. Oliver Stone  
SEARCHING FOR BOBBY FISCHER (1993), Steven Zaillian

### **SIMON ABKARIAN (“HE”)**

An Armenian who grew up in France and the Lebanon, Simon Abkarian was first known for his charismatic performances in leading roles in the Greek Tragedies with the Theatre du Soleil (directed by Ariane Mnouchkine). In 2001 Simon Abkarian received the Prix Moliere (the highest accolade in French theatre for an actor) for his performance in Une Bete Sur La Lune (directed by Irina Brook). He has also directed several plays including an acclaimed production of Titus Andronicus (2003). YES is his first leading role in the English language on film. He is currently playing the male lead in a French comedy, LE DEMON DE MIDI .

Selected feature film credits:

NOT FOR OR AGAINST (2003), dir. Cedric Klapisch  
ARAM (2002), dir. Robert Kechichian  
THE TRUTH ABOUT CHARLIE (2002), dir. Jonathan Demme  
ALMOST PEACEFUL (2002), dir. Michel Deville  
ARARAT (2002), dir. Atom Egoyan  
LILAS LILI (1999), dir. Marie Vermillard  
TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT (1997), dir. Arnold Barkus  
LE SILENCE DU RAK (1996), Christopher Loizillon  
WHEN THE CAT’S AWAY...(1996), dir. Cedric Klapisch

**SAM NEILL** (“ANTHONY”)

Sam Neill’s distinguished career spans a great variety of roles and genres of filmmaking, from blockbusters such as JURASSIC PARK (1993) to his role as the husband in THE PIANO (1993). Sam Neil has received many accolades for his work including three Golden Globe and three AFI nominations for best actor and an AFI best actor award for A CRY IN THE DARK (1989).

Selected feature film credits:

THE ZOOKEEPER (2001), dir. Ralph Ziman  
THE DISH (2000), dir. Rob Sitch  
MY MOTHER FRANK (2000), dir. Mark Lamprell  
THE HORSE WHISPERER (1998), dir. Robert Redford  
VICTORY (1995), dir. Mark Peploe  
JURASSIC PARK (1993), dir. Steven Spielberg  
THE PIANO (1993), dir. Jane Campion  
DEATH IN BRUNSWICK (1991), dir. John Ruane  
THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER (1990), dir. John McTiernan  
DEAD CALM (1989), dir. Philip Noyce

**SHIRLEY HENDERSON** (“CLEANER”)

Shirley Henderson is a favourite collaborator of several filmmakers (including Michael Winterbottom and Mike Leigh). She has delighted audiences everywhere with her varied and always surprising and touching performances.

Selected feature film credits:

WILBUR WANTS TO KILL HIMSELF (2002), dir. Lone Scherfig  
HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS (2002), dir. Chris Columbus  
ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE MIDLANDS (2002), dir. Shane Meadows  
24 HOUR PARTY PEOPLE (2002), dir. Michael Winterbottom  
BRIDGET JONES’S DIARY (2001), dir. Sharon Maguire  
THE CLAIM (2000), dir. Michael Winterbottom  
TOPSY TURVY (1999), dir. Mike Leigh  
WONDERLAND (1999), dir. Michael Winterbottom  
TRAINSPOTTING (1996), dir. Danny Boyle

**SHEILA HANCOCK** (“AUNT”)

The legendary Sheila Hancock (a household name for her work in British television) is known for the caustic intelligence and humour she brings to her roles.

Selected Feature Film Credits:

HOLD BACK THE NIGHT (1999), dir. Philip Davis  
LOVE AND DEATH ON LONG ISLAND (1997), dir. Richard Kweitniowski

DANGEROUS LADY (1995), dir. John Woods  
A BUSINESS AFFAIR (1993), dir. Charlotte Brandstrom  
3 MEN AND A LITTLE LADY (1990), dir. Emile Ardolino  
BUSTER (1988), dir. David Green

**SAMANTHA BOND** (“KATE”)

Selected Feature Film Credits:

DIE ANOTHER DAY (2002), dir. Lee Tamahori  
THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH (1999), dir. Michael Apted  
WHAT RATS WON'T DO (1998), dir. Alastair Reid  
TOMORROW NEVER DIES (1997), dir. Roger Spottiswoode  
GOLDEN EYE (1995), dir. Martin Campbell  
ERIK THE VIKING (1989), dir. Terry Jones

**STEPHANIE LEONIDAS** (“GRACE”)

Selected Feature Film Credits:

FOGBOUND (2002), dir. Ate de Jong

**GARY LEWIS** (“BILLY”)

Selected Feature Film Credits:

GANGS OF NEW YORK (2002), dir. Martin Scorsese  
SHINER (2000), dir. John Irvin  
BILLY ELLIOT (1999), dir. Stephen Daldry  
EAST IS EAST (1999), dir. Damien O'Donnell  
MY NAME IS JOE (1998), dir. Ken Loach  
ORPHANS (1997), dir. Peter Mullan  
CARLA'S SONG (1996), dir. Ken Loach  
SHALLOW GRAVE (1994), dir. Danny Boyle

**WIL JOHNSON** (“VIRGIL”)

Selected Feature Film Credits:

EMOTIONAL BACKGAMMON (2001), dir. Leon Herbert  
SOUTH WEST 9 (2000), dir. John Irvin  
BABYMOTHER (1999), dir. Julian Henriques

**RAYMOND WARING** (“WHIZZER”)

Selected Feature Film Credits:

24 HOUR PARTY PEOPLE (2002), dir. Michael Winterbottom  
LUCKY BREAK (2001), dir. Peter Cattaneo

## **CREW BIOGRAPHIES**

### **ALEXEI RODIONOV (DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY)**

Alexei Rodionov graduated from the Union State Film Institute (Department of Cinematography) in Moscow 1972. He worked on Features for television as a camera operator and then as a Director of Photography of Feature Films at Mosfilm Studio in Moscow. To date, Alexei has completed eighteen feature films including COME AND SEE, Elem Klimov's anti-war masterpiece. He has been twice nominated as Best Cinematographer in the Russia's prestigious Nika Awards for his work on MUSULMANIN (1995) and ZHENA KEROSINSHCHIKA (1988). YES re-unites Alexei with Sally for the first time since ORLANDO.

Selected feature film credits:

WHERE ESKIMOS LIVE (2002) – Tomasz Wisziewski

EISENSTEIN (2000) – Renny Bartlett

MUSULMANIN (1995) – Vladimir Khotinenko

ORLANDO (1992) – Sally Potter

ZHENA KEROSINSHCHIKA (1988) – Aleksandr Kajdanovsky

COME AND SEE (1985) – Elem Klimov

### **CARLOS CONTI (PRODUCTION DESIGNER)**

Born in Cordoba, Argentina Carlos Conti moved to Paris over twenty years ago where he has established an international reputation as one of cinema's great production designers. His credits include: BETTY BLUE , directed by Jean-Jacques Beineix; MA SAISON PREFERÉE, directed by André Techiné , NELLY AND MR ARNAUD, directed by Claude Sautet and MOTORCYCLE DIARIES , directed by Walter Salles. YES is the third collaboration with Sally Potter after THE TANGO LESSON and THE MAN WHO CRIED.

Selected feature film credits:

THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES (2004) – Walter Salles

THE MAN WHO CRIED (2000) – Sally Potter

FOOLISH HEART - Hector Babenco

THE TANGO LESSON (1997) - Sally Potter

NELLY ET MONSIEUR ARNAUD - Claude Sautet

MA SAISON PREFEREE - André Techiné

ROSELYNE ET LES LIONS - Jean-Jacques Beineix

BETTY BLUE - Jean-Jacques Beineix

**JACQUELINE DURRAN (COSTUME DESIGNER)**

Jacqueline Durrans assisted Academy Award-winner Lindy Hemming on several films including THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH, Mike Leigh's TOPSY TURVY, and Sally Potter's THE MAN WHO CRIED. She then made the transition to costume designer with Mike Leigh's ALL OR NOTHING and has since designed the costumes for several films including David Mckenzie's acclaimed debut YOUNG ADAM.

Selected feature film credits:

VERA DRAKE (2004) – Mike Leigh

YOUNG ADAM (2003) – David Mckenzie

ALL OR NOTHING (2002) – Mike Leigh

**JEAN-PAUL MUGEL (SOUND MIXER)**

Jean-Paul Mugel has a distinguished career as one of France's most accomplished sound-recordists and mixers. As part of his work for the screen he has recorded live music as well as films in French, English and Spanish and most recently Oliver Stone's epic ALEXANDER.

Selected feature film credits:

ALEXANDER (2004) – Oliver Stone

THE MAN WHO CRIED (2000) – Sally Potter

BEAU TRAVAIL (1999) – Claire Denis

ALICE & MARTIN (1998) - André Téchiné

THE TANGO LESSON (1997) – Sally Potter

FARINELLI (1994) – Gerard Corbiau

KIKA (1993) – Pedro Almodovar

WINGS OF DESIRE (1987) – Wim Wenders

**VINCENT TULLI (RE-RECORDING MIXER)**

Vincent Tulli had a career as a sound-recordist before moving into post-production sound. (He sometimes combines the two). He is also involved with music production.

Selected feature film credits:

CHEEKY (2003) – David Thewlis

CRIMSON RIVERS (2000) – Mathieu Kassovitz

JOAN OF ARC (1999) – Luc Besson

TAXI (1998) – Luc Besson

L'APARTEMENT (1996) – Gilles Mamouni

LA HAINE (1995) – Mathieu Kassovitz

**DANIEL GODDARD (EDITOR)**

Daniel Goddard's work as a film editor has been in parallel with directing his own short experimental films and installations with his brother, under the name 'honey brothers'. He also writes and performs music.

Selected feature film credits:

BODYSONG (2003) – Simon Pummell

LOVE IS THE DEVIL (1998) – John Maybury

## **DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY**

### **SALLY POTTER (WRITER / DIRECTOR)**

Sally Potter left school at sixteen to become a filmmaker. She joined the London Filmmakers Co-op and started making experimental short films. She later trained as a dancer and choreographer at the London School of Contemporary Dance, before founding her own company, The Limited Dance Company.

Sally went on to become an award-winning performance artist and theatre director, with shows including 'Mounting', 'Death and the Maiden' and 'Berlin'. In addition, she was a member of several music bands (including FIG and The Film Music Orchestra) working as a lyricist and singer. She collaborated (as a singer-songwriter) with composer Lindsay Cooper on the song cycle 'Oh Moscow' which was performed throughout Europe, Russia and North America. (Her music work continued later when she co-composed with David Motion the soundtrack to ORLANDO, and created the score for THE TANGO LESSON. Her most recent music work is as producer and composer of the original tracks for YES.)

Sally returned to filmmaking with her short film THRILLER (1979) which was a hit on the international festival circuit. This was followed by her first feature film, THE GOLD DIGGERS (1983), starring Julie Christie; a short film, THE LONDON STORY (1986); a documentary series for Channel 4, TEARS, LAUGHTER, FEARS AND RAGE (1986); and a programme about women in Soviet cinema, I AM AN OX, I AM A HORSE, I AM A MAN, I AM A WOMAN (1988).

The internationally acclaimed ORLANDO (1992) bought Sally's work to a wide audience. Starring Tilda Swinton, the film was based on Virginia Woolf's classic novel (adapted for the screen by Sally Potter). In addition to two Academy Award nominations, ORLANDO won more than 25 international awards, including the "Felix" awarded by the European Film Academy for the best Young European Film of 1993, and first prizes at St Petersburg, Thessaloniki and other festivals.

Sally's next film was THE TANGO LESSON, (in which she also performed, with renowned tango dancer, Pablo Veron). First presented at the Venice Film Festival, the film was awarded the "Ombú de Oro" for Best Film at Mar del Plata Festival, Argentina, the SADAIC Great Award from the Sociedad Argentina de Autores y Compositores de Música, as well as receiving "Best Film" nominations from BAFTA and the US National Board of Review.

In 2000 she completed THE MAN WHO CRIED (starring Johnny Depp, Christina Ricci, Cate Blanchett and John Turturro), a story set just before World War II in Paris, in the world of the opera.

Feature film credits:

THE MAN WHO CRIED (2000)

THE TANGO LESSON (1997)

ORLANDO (1992)

THE GOLD DIGGERS (1983)

## **PRODUCERS' BIOGRAPHIES**

### **CHRISTOPHER SHEPPARD (PRODUCER)**

YES is producer Christopher Sheppard's fourth collaboration with Sally Potter.

After a successful career in publishing, first as a journalist (with assignments across five continents) then as managing editor of 'The New Internationalist', Christopher Sheppard began producing and directing documentary films in 1985. The first of these, MAN-MADE FAMINE, presented by Glenda Jackson, won several international awards. He has made more than twenty documentary films, most of them independent productions tackling social and political issues, including DEATH OF A RUNAWAY (1992) and CHILD'S EYE (1995), both nominated for Royal Television Society Awards.

Adventure Pictures was formed in 1988 by Christopher Sheppard when he joined forces with director Sally Potter. The widely acclaimed ORLANDO (1992) marked his debut as a feature film producer, and was a five-nation co-production (one of the earliest independent films to be structured this way). This was followed by THE TANGO LESSON (1997), where Christopher once again brought together a dynamic team of independent film companies from around the world, and then THE MAN WHO CRIED (2000).

His work as a producer has been characterised by the creative management of extremely low budget films which nevertheless have impressively high production values. For YES, Christopher enlisted the collaboration of Andrew Fierberg to tackle the challenge of even-lower-budget filmmaking.

### **ANDREW FIERBERG (PRODUCER)**

Andrew Fierberg is the principal of Studio Fierberg and was the co-founder of double A films, a New York-based company, created in 1995, to produce provocative, independent films. Andrew's credits include: SECRETARY (Special Jury Prize winner at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival); 13 CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ONE THING, starring Matthew McConaughey, John Turturro and Alan Arkin; and HAMLET, starring Ethan Hawke, Sam Shepard and Bill Murray.

Upcoming projects include AMERICA BROWN, premiering at the 2004 Tribeca Film Festival and the new Lodge Kerrigan film starring Damian Lewis, which he is producing with Steven Soderbergh.

Andrew sits on the Board of Directors of the Film Forum (New York). Andrew was supervising producer of a series of six short films that accompanied "The Concert for New York City" on DVD, a project which helped to raise more than \$30 million for 9/11 related charities. He worked on the short film series with directors Woody Allen, Spike Lee, Martin Scorsese, Ed Burns, Kevin Smith and Jerry Seinfeld.

## GREENESTREET FILMS

GreeneStreet Films (GSF), an independent financing and production company, was founded by independent producer John Penotti and actor Fisher Stevens in 1996. A thriving presence in New York's independent film community, GreeneStreet is dedicated to making quality films and television projects with high production values that are both artistically provocative and financially viable. To accomplish this goal, GSF has secured operational and production financing through private equity sources.

Currently the company is in post-production on its latest project: SLOW BURN a sexy thriller from writer/director Wayne Beach starring Ray Liotta, LL Cool J, Mekhi Phifer and Taye Diggs which GSF co-financed and co-produced with Sidney Kimmel Entertainment. GSF's most recent production, the comedy UPTOWN GIRLS directed by Boaz Yakin (FRESH, REMEMBER THE TITANS) starring Brittany Murphy and Dakota Fanning, was released by MGM in August 2003.

GSF's slate of upcoming projects will continue the company's tradition of economically and intelligently producing a diverse array of quality projects. This fall, GSF and Killer Films teamed up for the first time to option the New York Times bestseller Positively Fifth Street, which John Ridley (THREE KINGS) will adapt and direct. MONK, a biopic on iconoclastic jazz musician and composer Thelonious Sphere Monk, will reunite GSF with writer-director Leon Ichaso (PINERO). The comedy JACK TUCKER will mark the directing debut of screenwriters John Requa and Glenn Ficarra (BAD SANTA , CATS AND DOGS), who will co-direct from their script. Woody Harrelson will star as Jack Tucker. Benjamin Ross (RKO 481, THE YOUNG POISONER'S HANDBOOK) will direct PERCY TOWNE FIFTH, a dark comedy written by playwright Jerome Hairston.

GSF financed and produced the number one box office hit SWIMFAN, released by Twentieth Century Fox, and the five-time Oscar-nominated Miramax release IN THE BEDROOM, directed by Todd Field, starring Sissy Spacek, Marisa Tomei, and Tom Wilkinson. GSF also financed and produced Fisher Stevens' JUST A KISS, which was released by Paramount Classics and the three-time ALMA award winning PIÑERO, released by Miramax, as well as the critically acclaimed comedies THE CHATEAU (released by IFC Films) and LISA PICARD IS FAMOUS (released by First Look). LISA PICARD IS FAMOUS was an official selection of the 2000 Cannes International Film Festival in the Un Certain Regard category. Other GSF films include ILLUMINATA, A PRICE ABOVE RUBIES and I'M NOT RAPPAPORT.

In 2003 GSF teamed up with writer/directors Yakin, Eli Roth (CABIN FEVER), and Scott Spiegel (EVIL DEAD 2) to launch Raw Nerve, an independent horror film production company. Raw Nerve's mandate is to create a brand of well-crafted, intense horror films on lean budgets, following in the tradition of John Carpenter's HALLOWEEN, Tobe Hooper's THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE and, more recently, Roth's CABIN FEVER. The label's first film, 2001 MANAICS, a remake of Herschell Gordon Lewis's slasher classic 2000 MANIACS, starring Robert Englund (NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET) is currently in post-production.

During Cannes 2003, GSF launched GreeneStreet Films International (GSFI), an international sales company that sells GSF, Raw Nerve and third-party projects worldwide.

**John Penotti** (Executive Producer)

John Penotti began his film career by working on various Sidney Lumet features including Q+A, FAMILY BUSINESS and A STRANGER AMONG US, in addition to acting as an associate producer on Fine Line's NAKED IN NEW YORK. His other producing credits include Miramax's A PRICE ABOVE RUBIES, Universal's I'M NOT RAPPAPORT and Paramount's COMPANY MAN.

John executive produced IN THE BEDROOM, starring Sissy Spacek, Marisa Tomei, Tom Wilkinson and Nick Stahl. John produced PINERO starring Benjamin Bratt and released domestically by Miramax Films. In addition, he produced the #1 box office hit SWIMFAN, as well as the 2003 box office hit UPTOWN GIRLS, directed by Boaz Yakin. John executive produced Fisher Stevens' JUST A KISS, as well as two other projects for GSF; THE CHATEAU, distributed by IFC Films and the critically acclaimed LISA PICARD IS FAMOUS. Currently John is producing ROMANCE AND CIGARETTES, a musical starring James Gandolfini, Susan Sarandon, Kate Winslet, Mandy Moore and Christopher Walken, directed by John Turturro, and executive produced by Joel and Ethan Coen.

**Fisher Stevens** (Executive Producer)

As an actor, Fisher made his motion picture debut at the age of sixteen in the horror film THE BURNING. But it was THE FLAMINGO KID in 1984 that established Fisher as a serious young actor. Since then, Fisher has gone on to star in such films as MY SCIENCE PROJECT, REVERSAL OF FORTUNE, SHORT CIRCUIT, HACKERS, ONLY YOU, UNDISPUTED, and many others. On stage he was seen on Broadway in *Torch Song Trilogy*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, and the Lincoln Center's production of *Carousel*, as well as numerous television appearances.

Fisher co-founded the New York-based theater company NAKED ANGELS in 1986, which is still going strong after fifteen years. He is also a founding partner of GreeneStreet Films and has executive produced several films including the five-time Oscar-nominated IN THE BEDROOM. JUST A KISS marked Fisher's directorial debut. Currently, he is executive producing SLOW BURN a sexy thriller starring Ray Liotta, LL Cool J, Mekhi Pfeifer and Taye Diggs.

**Cedric Jeanson** (Executive Producer)

Cedric has been a partner and President, Production Financing of GSF since August 2001. As President of GSFI, Cedric supervises all aspects of the acquisitions, sales and distribution of all GSF and Raw Nerve films on a worldwide basis.

Prior to GSF Cedric joined Miramax in 1993, rising to Executive Vice President, Miramax International, a position he held during his last three years there. While at Miramax, Cedric was involved in the international sales, distribution, and marketing of all the Miramax and Dimension films, a total of 150 films including PULP FICTION, HEAVENLY CREATURES, THE ENGLISH PATIENT, GOOD WILL HUNTING, JACKIE BROWN and the SCREAM franchise, among many others. Prior to Miramax, Cedric co-wrote and co-produced award-winning television commercials in France and later obtained his MBA from the J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University in 1991. He then worked as a Manager of International Distribution for Dino De Laurentiis Communications.

## THE UK FILM COUNCIL

The UK Film Council is the Government-backed strategic agency for film in the UK. Its main aim is to stimulate a competitive, successful and vibrant UK film industry and culture, and to promote the widest possible enjoyment and understanding of cinema throughout the nations and regions of the UK.

The New Cinema Fund aims to support filmmakers who are curious, diverse and demanding – just like their audience. With £15 million to invest over three years, the New Cinema Fund is committed to innovative and original material from a diverse range of filmmakers.

To date the New Cinema Fund has announced over 30 feature film funding awards including Kevin Macdonald's TOUCHING THE VOID, (Outstanding British Film, BAFTA 2004, Best British Film, Evening Standard Film Awards, 2004), Emily Young's KISS OF LIFE (Carl Foreman Award (first film), BAFTA 2004), Ntshaveni Wa Luruli's THE WOODEN CAMERA (Crystal Bear, Berlinale 2004), Peter Mullan's THE MAGDALENE SISTERS (Golden Lion, Venice Film Festival 2002, MEDIA 2003 Award), Paul Greengrass' BLOODY SUNDAY (Golden Bear, Berlin Film Festival 2002, Audience Award, Sundance Film Festival 2002), Meera Syal's ANITA & ME, Duncan Roy's triptych AKA, Simon Pummell's BODYSONG (BAFTA Interactive Award 2003), Don Letts & Rick Elgood's ONE LOVE, John Crowley's INTERMISSION, and Dagur Kári's NOI THE ALBINO.

Up and coming projects include Michael Caton Jones' SHOOTING DOGS, Saul Dibb's BULLET BOY, Lucile Hadjigalilovic's INNOCENCE, Amma Asante's A WAY OF LIFE, Brad McGann's IN MY FATHER'S DEN, Timothy and Stephen Quay's THE PIANO TUNER OF EARTHQUAKES, Ken Loach, Emanno Olmi and Abbas Kiarostami's TICKETS, and Ziad Doveiri's LILA DIT CA.

The New Cinema Fund also invests in an ambitious programme of shorts schemes including Cinema Extreme, The Completion Fund and Low Budget Digital Shorts to encourage directors, producers and creative talent to explore new storytelling methods in the short film genre. The New Cinema Fund co-finances over 120 shorts and trains over 1900 short filmmakers per year.

The New Cinema Fund is a founding sponsor of the Berlinale Talent Campus, now in its third year. The Berlinale Talent Campus 2004 gave 520 emerging filmmakers from 84 countries the opportunity to learn from world-class filmmakers and forge international contacts.

### **Paul Trijbits** (Executive Producer)

Paul Trijbits is Head of the New Cinema Fund at the UK Film Council where he acts as executive producer on all the films which are supported by the New Cinema Fund.

Before joining the UK Film Council Paul produced and executive produced a number of feature films with both first-time and established directors. His credits prior to joining the UK Film Council include Paul Hills' BOSTON KICKOUT, Richard Stanley's HARDWARE, Danny Cannon's THE YOUNG AMERICANS, William Brookfield's MILK, Dom Rotheroe's MY BROTHER TOM, Paul Weiland's ROSEANNA'S GRAVE, John Duigan's PARANOID, Philippa Cousins' HAPPY NOW and Menhaj Huda's IS HARRY ON THE BOAT?

## **END CREDITS**

### Cast (in order of appearance)

Cleaner	SHIRLEY HENDERSON
She	JOAN ALLEN
Anthony	SAM NEILL
He	SIMON ABKARIAN
Virgil	WIL JOHNSON
Billy	GARY LEWIS
Whizzer	RAYMOND WARING
Grace	STEPHANIE LEONIDAS
Cleaner in Swimming Pool	BARBARA OXLEY
Kate	SAMANTHA BOND
Waiter	KEV ORKIAN
Kitchen Boss	GEORGE YIASOUMI
Cleaner in Laboratory	BERYL SCOTT
Aunt	SHEILA HANCOCK
Father Christmas	LOL COXHILL
Priest	FATHER CHARLES OWEN
Nuns	MANDY COOMBES
	BETI OWEN
Cleaner in Nursing Home	DOT BOND
Woman in Cuban Apartment	DORCA REYES SÁNCHEZ
Friends in Beirut	ANTOINE AGOUDJIAN
	CHRISTINA GALSTIAN
Associate Producers	LUCIE WENIGEROVÁ
	DIANE GELON
Production Manager	MICHAEL MANZI
Script Supervisor	PENNY EYLES
Story Editor	WALTER DONOHUE
Production Coordinator	SCOTT BASSETT
Second Assistant Director	OLIVIA PENISTON-BIRD
Director's Assistant	AMOS FIELD REID
Production Assistants	DAVID PURCHAS
	HESTER CAMPBELL
Assistant to Joan Allen	PAM PLUMMER
Steadicam Operator	ERIC BIALAS
Focus Puller / Operator	DENIS GARNIER
Clapper Loader	SARA DEANE
Boom Operator	PIERRE TUCAT
Chief Make-up Artist	CHANTAL LÉOTHIER
Stills Photographers	NICOLA DOVE
	GAUTIER DEBLONDE
Videographer	DANIEL MUDFORD
Production Lawyer	LAW OFFICE DIANE GELON
Production Accountants	PETER EARDLEY
	FREYA PINSENT
LONDON CREW	
Location Manager	BEN GLADSTONE
Location Assistant	SAMSON HAVELAND
Casting Assistant	EMILY CRAIG
Third Assistant Directors	ADAM COOP
	CHRISTOPHER BURGESS
Floor Runner	MICHAEL CLARK-HALL
Art Director	CLAIRE SPOONER
Art Department Assistants	JOSHUA HARTNETT
	CESAR BAEZ
Set Costumer	CAMILLE BENDA
Additional Costumes	CARLO MANZI RENTALS
	ANGELS THE COSTUMIERS
Wigs	LONDON WIGS
Gaffers	MARK CLAYTON
	BARNABY SWEET

Electrician	BENJAMIN KERR
Trainee Electrician	PETE EMERY
Trainee Clapper Loader	XIAOYU LI
Catering	ANNA CARRINGTON
Location Vehicles	5 STAR LOCATION CATERING
Unit Driver	WILLIES WHEELS Ltd
Fight Coordinator	IAN LISI
	ANDREAS PETRIDES
<b>CUBA CREW</b>	
Local Production	AUDIOVISUALES ICAIC
Executive Producer	PRODUCCIÓN-DISTRIBUCIÓN
Production Manager	FRANK CABRERA RODE
Location Manager	IOHAMIL NAVARRO CUESTA
Production Assistant	CARLOS DE LA HUERTA
Runners	JORGE GARCÍA LORENZO
	ALBERTO REYTOR
	MALVIN CABRERA
	CARLOS CAMACHO
	VIVIAN POMBO
	MIRIAM MARTÍNEZ
	CARLOS BUSTAMANTE
	MAGALY BATISTA
	ALINA POMBO
	LIZ ALVAREZ
	JULIO CÉSAR MORA
	ELBIA RONDÓN
	RAFAEL SOUCHAY
	HUMBERTO FIGUEROA
	DANIEL PÉREZ
	ARIEL LEYVA
	HECTOR ALFARO
	DAMIAN FUENTES
	JORGE MENDIVIL
	ALEXANDER IBANEZ
	ARMANDO ROCHE
	FRANCISCO CRUZ
	NELSON HERNÁNDEZ
	IGNACIO VALDÉS
	LUCIDES COLLAZO
	JULIO CRUZ
	RICARDO VICTORES
	MIGUEL MONTALVO
	CARLOS MIRANDA
<b>DOMINICAN REPUBLIC CREW</b>	
Local Production	BASANTA & Co, S.A.
Executive Producer	JUAN BASANTA
Location Manager	FERNANDO MEDINA
Production Manager	PABLO LLUBERES
Production Assistants	ELENA TEJADA
	JOSÉ ENRIQUE ESPÍRITU SANTO
Costumes	CHELY MORAN
Art Department	TANYA VALETTE
	ISMAEL GUANTE
	RAUL RECIO
	CLARA RODRIGUEZ
	ORLANDO CARABALLO
	JULIO CÉSAR DIAZ V.
	RADAMÉS REYES
	JOSÉ MANUEL HERNÁNDEZ
	MIGUEL TAPIA
	ANDRÉS GONZÁLES "KABUBI"
	FRANCISCO HERRERA
	CRISTINO ADAMES
Transportation	JOSÉ JIMÉNES

Dominican Casting

VOLUMEN AGENCIA DE CASTING

**BELFAST CREW**

Production Coordinator  
Runner  
Driver

DEAN HAGAN  
ROBERT WARD  
RAYMOND BURNS

**BEIRUT CREW**

Executive Producer  
Production Manager  
Armenian Advisor

MICHEL GHOSN  
LARA SABA  
HAGOP HANDIAN

**POST-PRODUCTION CREW**

Post-production Supervisor  
Post-production Consultants

JONATHAN HAREN  
JEANETTE HALEY  
EMMA ZEE

**Assistant Editors**

TOM KINNERSLY  
ANJA SIEMENS  
LALIT GOYAL  
SEAN LYONS

Re-recording Mixer

VINCENT TULLI

Assistant Re-recording Mixer

RICHARD STREET

Re-recorded at

SHEPPERTON STUDIOS

Sound Effects Editor

JOAKIM SUNDSTRÖM

Dialogue & ADR Editor

ANNE DELACOUR

Supervising Foley Editor and Mixer

ANTHONY FAUST A.M.P.S.

Foley Editor

ROBERT BRAZIER

Foley Artist

GEORGE HAPIG

ADR Mixer

JEAN-PAUL MUGEL

Foley and ADR recorded at

MAYFLOWER STUDIOS

Dialogue Coaches

POLL MOUSSOULIDES  
JOAN WASHINGTON

Digital Colour and Visual Effects by  
Production Managers

DIGIMAGE  
TOMMASO VERGALLO

Head of Technology

JUAN EVENO

Digital Grading

ANGELO COSIMANO

Assisted by

FRANÇOIS DUPUY

CLAIRE COUTELLE

ALINE CONAN

NATACHA LOUIS

Scanning

SILVAIN HEITZ

On-line Editing

KENJI CHANSIN

CHRISTOPHE ROBLEDO

Digital Operator

JEAN RÉMY MORANÇAIS

Post Supervisor

TOBY RIDGWAY

Scientific Images

OXFORD SCIENTIFIC FILMS

Research

ANN HUMMEL

Avid supplied by

ARTISTIC IMAGES

Lighting Equipment

AFM LIGHTING

AFM Contact

EDDIE DIAS

Insurance Services

AON / ALBERT G. RUBEN

Completion Bond

FILM FINANCES LTD

For Film Finances

SHEILA FRASER MILNE

RUTH HODGSON

Freight Agent

DYNAMIC INTERNATIONAL

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SOHO IMAGES

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LABORATOIRE ÉCLAIR

Technical Director

PHILIPPE REINAUDO

Optical Grading

BRUNO PATIN

Production Manager

OLIVIER CHIAVASSA

Title Design

STEPHEN MASTERS

Aaton Camera supplied by

ICE FILM EQUIPMENT

Film Stock supplied by

KODAK

Sound

DOLBY DIGITAL

**FOR GREENESTREET FILMS**

Head of Production  
Head of Business and Legal Affairs  
Manager of Business and Legal Affairs  
Business and Legal Affairs Consultant  
Assistant to John Penotti  
Assistant to Cedric Jeanson

TIM WILLIAMS  
VICKI CHERKAS  
MARY LAWLESS  
BRIAN KORNREICH  
LORI LAZAR  
MICHELLE JONAS

**FOR UK FILM COUNCIL**

Production Executive  
Head of Physical Production  
Senior Business Affairs Executive

EMMA CLARKE  
FIONA MORHAM  
NATALIE BASS

**MUSIC**

**TEN LONG YEARS**

performed by B.B.King and Eric Clapton  
composed by Ridley B King/Jules Bihari  
published by Careers – BMG Music Publishing, Inc/Powerforce Music BMI  
Licensed courtesy of Warner Strategic Marketing UK

**NORKETSOU BAR**

performed by Winds of Passion  
courtesy of Garni

**WALTZ NO. 7 IN C SHARP MINOR, OP.64 NO.2**

composed by Frédéric Chopin  
performed by Dimitri Alexeev  
licensed courtesy of Emi Records Ltd

**PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2 IN C MINOR, OP. 18**

composed by Sergei Rachmaninoff  
performed by Yefim Bronfman, piano with The Philharmonia Orchestra  
conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen  
courtesy of Boosey & Hawkes Licensing  
courtesy of Sony Classical  
by arrangement with Sony Music Licensing

**WALTZ IN A FLAT MAJOR**

performed by Katia and Marielle Labèque  
composed by Johannes Brahms  
courtesy of Sony Classical  
by arrangement with Sony Music Licensing

**EL CARRETERO**

composed by Guillermo Portabales  
arranged by Gonzalo Grau  
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Latin-American Music Pub. Co. Ltd

**PARU RIVER**

by Philip Glass  
performed by Uakti  
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**YEGHISHI BAR**

performed by Yeghish Manoukian  
composed by Yeghish Manoukian  
courtesy of Parseghian Records

**IGUAZU**

performed by Gustavo A. Santaolalla  
composed by Gustavo A. Santaolalla  
published by Universal / MCA Music Ltd  
Licensed courtesy of Warner Strategic Marketing UK

**12/12**

performed by Kronos Quartet  
written by Ruben Isaac Alabarran Ortega, Enrique Arroyo  
and Emanuel Del Real Diaz  
(arr. Osvaldo Golijov)  
published by EMI Music Publishing  
Licensed courtesy of Warner Strategic Marketing UK

**CLAUDE CHALHOUB – GNOSSIENNE**

performed by Claude Chalhoub  
composed by Eric Satie  
(arr. by Claude Chalhoub)  
with kind permission of Métisse Music (publisher)  
(P) 2001 Teldec Classics International GMBH  
Taken from the album Claude Chalhoub 8573-83039-2  
Courtesy of Warner Classics

**FAWN**

composed by Tom Waits and Kathleen Brennan  
arranged by Sally Potter and Fred Frith  
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Original Music by

With the participation of

Additional Arrangement

Music Consultant

Music performed by:

Guitars

SALLY POTTER

FRED FRITH

GONZALO GRAU

OSVALDO GOLIJOV

FRED FRITH

Cristal Baschet, Ondes Martenot  
Piano, Bass, Percussion  
Saxophone  
Trumpet  
Duduk  
Tres  
Percussion  
Music recorded at  
Recording Engineer  
Recording Supervisor  
Copyright Consultants

THOMAS BLOCH  
GONZALO GRAU  
THOMAS KOENIG  
PHILIPPE SLOMINSKI  
ROSTOM KHACHIKIAN  
FINO GOMEZ ALMEIDA  
JEAN-PIERRE DROUET  
STUDIOS MERJITHUR, PARIS  
SAMY BARDET  
FRANCK LEBON  
IVAN CHANDLER – MUSICALITIES  
JILL MEYERS

With Special Thanks to  
John Berger  
Fiona Shaw

The Producers Gratefully Acknowledge the Contribution of:

Louis Bacon  
Chris Pia  
Michael Garfinkle  
Michael Gordon

David Liptak  
Joseph Petri  
James Caccavo  
Brian Collins

The Filmmakers Wish to Thank

Philippe Akoka  
Sandrine Ageorges  
Beverly Berger  
Nella Bielski  
Gabriel Boustani  
Giuliana Bruno  
Amy Carr  
Simon Channing Williams  
Julie Christie  
Prof. Shamshad Cockcroft  
Eric Clapton  
Prof. John Couchman  
Robyn Davidson  
Gail Egan  
Roslyn Fierberg  
Neil Gillard  
Philip Glass  
Kristina Goodman

Vince Holden  
Amelia Hougen  
Isaac and Mark  
Achim Korte  
The Kronos Quartet  
Pankaj Mishra  
Prof. Peter Mobbs  
Hinke Multhaupt  
Jeannie Murphy  
Thom Osborn  
Leda Papaconstantinou  
Simon Perry  
Prof. Steven Rose  
Gustavo Santaolalla  
Catherine Schaub  
Jean Turner  
Tom Waits  
Bart Walker

Morris Fierberg (1930 – 2003)

Frederick Sheppard

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Aquascutum  
Angie Bruce Flowers  
Staff and Residents of Athlone House Nursing Home, Highgate  
Autoridad Metropolitana de Transporte (AMET)  
Ayuntamiento de San Pedro de Macoris  
Ayuntamiento Santo Domingo  
Capital Scenery  
Central Foundation Girls School, Bow  
Cerruti  
CXD

The Drapers' Company  
Fornarina  
Grahams Hi-Fi  
Gran Car Company, Cuba  
LA Fitness, Leadenhall Street  
Oficina de Patrimonio Cultural, Dominican Republic  
Northern Ireland Film and Television Commission  
Smiths of Smithfield  
St. Joseph's Church at Highgate  
Therapy, Bishopsgate  
Únion Árabe de Cuba

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## **YES: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

The Q&A that follows is an amalgamation of different sessions at the first festival screenings of 'YES', in Telluride, Toronto, and London. (Joan Allen was also on stage at some of these).

Sally Potter writes: "Unlike some directors, I always greatly enjoy these sessions. As I find that the audience teaches me about how the film has worked for them; and therefore what the real relationship is between my intention and the final result. In effect, I discover what I have done; and the things I intended or hoped for fall into place, sometimes in quite surprising ways.

What frequently astonishes me is how consistent responses are in different countries and the similarities in the questions people ask.

What the edited transcripts do not indicate is the emotional reactions of these audiences: the laughter and the tears, the hugs in the aisles of the cinema, the private responses and questions from those too shy to speak in public.

My thanks are due to all those un-named questioners, both public and private."

**Q: What prompted you to make the film at this particular time?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

I started to write the script on 12th September 2001, in direct response to what had happened the day before. What was evident was that there were going to be increasing levels of demonisation of people from the Middle East and reverse levels of hatred of Americans. And so I asked myself: what can I contribute as a film maker? I thought a good starting point was a love story between a man from the Middle East and an American woman, in which love and attraction initially transcends difference, but when world events, history and national identity can no longer be kept out of the relationship, they have to slug it out. I started with the scene that eventually became the scene in the car park, which is really the hub of the whole thing. That was the genesis, the initial impulse, let's say. Also, in the way the story would be told, its' tone of voice, I wanted to try and make something light in the face of such global heaviness, with optimism and hope embedded in it. And rather than make something didactic about the themes, I decided to go into the hidden emotional currents of both the fear of difference, but also the attraction and love for the other. In short, to make a love story out of a situation full of hate.

**Q: Why did you decide to write the script in verse?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

The decision to do it in verse felt like an absolutely natural one. It came out that way; it wanted to come out that way. It was as if some of the ideas that I wanted to express and have the characters talk about would be hard to say in prose. Much of the film is written in iambic pentameter (ten syllables a line) which some say is close to the rhythm of thought or of breathing, and, in English at least, is a very natural way of speaking. Some of the verse is eight syllables a line, particularly when something direct needs to be said. It's a sharper sort of rhythm.

Apparently sales of poetry go up in times of war. There's a need to be able to hold a distilled phrase in the mind and in the heart rather than prose which just kind of runs and disappears. That is maybe another reason why my instinctive impulse was towards verse. I felt: let's use this marvellous gift that we've been given, the gift of words, and find their sensuality, their strength and their distillation in the way these characters speak. Let's try and create a Middle Eastern man who's human and round, who's complex. Let's create an innocent American woman, who's not supporting the policies of the Bush regime, (even though of course in the film - very importantly - she never mentions that directly and nobody mentions 9/11 either. The film is set in the present but the issues the characters are facing have deep historical roots and universal implications). Those were the starting points, those two things; poetry, and politics.

**Q: Did the poetry come to you easily?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

It came out in a torrent. It felt entirely natural as a way of expressing this strange blend of ideas; love and religion and war and death, which otherwise might have become rather heavy and didactic in everyday speech. They were big, big ideas to handle. But something about the form of verse, and iambic pentameter in particular, creates a flow to things that naturalises them.

I think of the film almost like a long song and the song form is something everybody knows. Rap is just one of its more recent incarnations. Poetry is simple and old and direct - from Icelandic sagas and Sanskrit to ballads and hip-hop. Both my experience of writing in verse and the actors' experience of performing it, was that it was liberating. I worked as a song lyricist a lot before, so perhaps that's why, for me, it came naturally.

**Q: What were your directions to the actors about how to speak the verse?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

Ignore the rhyme, ignore the form, just concentrate on the sense and the emotion. We talked a lot in rehearsal about what it meant, how they felt about it, how it related to their lives and so on. We worked as deeply as we could on rooting the language in their own experience and finding an authentic place from which to speak. In other words to naturalize it as much as possible. So it was a kind of paradox, that having written such a precise holding structure to contain the ideas, we then had to let it go, throw it away, or at least loosen it up. The words were adhered to precisely but there was an irreverent approach to the metre so the rhythms at the end of each line became less noticeable. I've had one or two private screenings where people who knew nothing about the film beforehand didn't even notice it was in verse. So, that was kind of interesting. I like it when people do notice and I like it when they don't.

**Q: Why Cuba?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

"Why Cuba?" - good title! I think it's a very character-driven moment in the story. The Auntie, in her dying reverie, is contemplating what she believed in her life. In fact, all the characters are trying to figure out what they believe; whether God exists or not, which of their dreams and beliefs have fallen, and which have held good. And for the Auntie, as she's a radical and an atheist, Cuba represents the last outpost of the communist dream: somewhere on earth where people are put before profit, where the economic system is not based on greed but on a principle of equality. Whatever it's failures, however many problems and contradictions there are in Cuba and elsewhere where communism has been tried, for the Auntie, it still represents that dream. And in effect it is her dying instruction to her niece: "Go there, go soon. Go before Castro dies, have a look".

It's also, in a way, the only place that these two lovers could finally meet, somewhere other than their own cultures, somewhere at the end of somewhere, this little island of disintegrating hope, where the buildings and the music are so vibrant, so colourful and so extraordinary.

**Q: Was the idea of having your central female character with a background as an Irish Catholic from Belfast there from the very beginning or did that come later on?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

It was there from the very beginning. I wanted to create two characters from two conflict zones in the world, who therefore in some sense or other would understand each other. Belfast is one such place and Beirut

(where he comes from) is another. So each of them would have experience of the different kinds of different kinds of bias, prejudice, and oppression involved in so-called 'holy wars'. So, that was an important symmetry in the story and, yes, it was there from the beginning.

**Q: Can you talk a little about how you approached the visual style of the film?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

It evolved over a period of time, in collaboration with our wonderful Russian cinematographer, Alexei Rodionov, who I had previously worked with on 'Orlando'. This was our second time working together, and my third with the designer Carlos Conti. We talked about the themes, and we tried to create a look that reflected them. I wanted to find ways of somehow making the camera speak in verse. That meant taking some risks. We experimented, for example, with the effect of shooting at different camera speeds, to find a visual equivalent of the rhythm of the verse in movement; a kind of camera music.

Also, part of the reason for the evolution of this particular visual language was economic necessity. I have so often found that limitation, constraint or obstacle becomes the engine that powers invention. Originally I was trying to figure out how we could shoot this film without any lights, because there didn't seem to be enough money in the budget to have any. One solution was to shoot at six frames a second, or even three. Later you print each frame four (or eight) times to bring it into sync at twenty four frames per second. You can shoot almost in the dark, and still see people's faces. I thought it was like a miracle when I discovered it, but I wasn't sure if it would work, so we did some tests and found that it was very beautiful; so I decided to make it part of the language of the film. And then we managed to get some lights as well!

We shot on Super-16mm film stock for the same budgetary reasons and then, after it was edited, it was digitally colour-graded and treated, but most of what you see on the screen was generated in the camera. But the way that Alexei shot is more important, I think than the different camera speeds. We called it 'searching', searching for the image. Alexei doesn't just look, he sees. It's a beautiful quality to work with.

**Q: Could you discuss the use of colour in the film, particularly the blue?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

Blue, blue sky, blue the sea, blue of her eyes, blue the horizon, the blue room where we ended up, Joan looked good in blue. And blue is considered to be the colour of eternity - what's above and what's beyond. But I think, really, that in the madness of preparing for a shoot and during the shoot itself, all the decisions you make are

entirely intuitive. So this is my analysis after the event, but also the beginning of an answer to your question. Colour is important for the film as an expression of the characters' relationship to the world and as the story progresses the film becomes increasingly saturated with colour. Each of the environments that the people live in is a kind of character in its own right with it's own colour palette. That was the basis of all the discussions with Carlos Conti. There's the emotional refrigerator that she and her husband, played by Sam Neill, live in; the cold all-white space, which, by the way was a real house in London, with a few things taken out and a few things put in; and then the room that her lover lives in has ochre walls and dark wood and a bit more human mess. Carlos, Alexei, and I discussed these colours and then Carlos and his team applied the paint!

**Q: Could you tell us how you shot the extraordinary scene when Joan Allen is at the deathbed of her Auntie?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

It was a cutting room decision to leave the close up of Joan at that length (nearly two minutes). When I was shooting I didn't know exactly how I would eventually structure the scene. The close-up was shot at 48 frames a second, so it's slow motion, and the camera just looks at Joan's face, feeling her state of loss, the loss of everything that matters to her. Sheila Hancock, who plays the Auntie, was saying her lines off-camera, but because it was shot slow-motion, in effect it was mute; we couldn't use the live sound because it wouldn't be in sync with the picture. In the cutting room I decided that the effect of seeing Joan weep without hearing the sound, and instead hearing what she was hearing - which was her Auntie's voice from 'the other side' - was very powerful. Joan as an actor was an amazing person to work with. She gave me, as a director, the incredible gift of trust and of truly making herself vulnerable and naked, at a kind of soul level, in order to connect with the material. I think that quality is visible in that shot.

**Q: Why did you choose for her not to say goodbye to her aunt?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

I think, at that point, they're beyond spoken words. But she is listening to her aunt's hidden voice, to her dying thoughts; although of course it is ambiguous whether these are actually her aunt's thoughts or the thoughts she imagines she is having. And, I don't know about you, but I have experienced, as I'm sure many others have, the grief of not having managed to say goodbye to somebody you love before they die; and the longing to hear their voice, just one more time, instead of the terrible finality and silence of death. In this sequence she's having that one last imaginary conversation with her aunt, the one she wishes she'd been able to have. I would urge everyone to do that with the people they love, just in case, and sooner rather than later!

**Q: At what point does music composition come into making the movie?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

Music is always really important to me in the writing process (as well as in post-production) and I often find myself playing something again and again while I'm writing. In this case it was the Philip Glass piece, 'Paru River', played by the Brazilian group Uakti, which appears several times in the film. When we were shooting, I wasn't sure how much music the film could sustain, in addition to the music of the voices. And it took some work in the cutting room to find out what the necessary balance was. In the end I felt it could sustain more than I had predicted.

The feeling is that the whole sound world is a score, not just the music, but also the speaking voices. And to balance the amount of dialogue - because there's a lot of it in the film - there also had to be the feeling of silence. I'm sure you noticed that quite a lot of the shots are mute, with just the inner voice of the character speaking. During the Auntie sequence, for example, you see Joan walking but you can't hear her feet, you just hear her Auntie's voice. It seemed to me that was something of an equivalent to what happens in your mind in a crisis situation or in a state of great emotional trauma or loss. Your world closes down and the irrelevant sounds disappear. You don't hear your footsteps, you just hear what is important at that moment. It's a kind of emergency state of stream of consciousness and I tried to find an equivalent in the sound world of the film, and the music was a part of that. I also believe that music can be used in a film as a form of dialogue with the image rather than just underscoring it. I experiment in the cutting room with the effect of many different kinds of music and instrumentation to see what happens. There is a fairly elective combination in the final score, from Eric Clapton and BB King to Brahms, but what they have in common is supreme musicianship, and also they are in related keys.

**Q: Did the story always end the way it does now? It seems like a happy ending.**

**SALLY POTTER:**

Well, as all filmmakers know, endings are notoriously difficult to write and this was no exception. I wrote a version in which they came together at the end, I wrote a version where they never came together. I wrote a very, very long sequence (which we filmed) where they talk when he arrives in Cuba and unravel the decisions they've made in their lives. And then they decide that they've really come back together in order to say goodbye, because they're reconciled with the fact that they must let each other go. But the more they talk, the closer they become. Anyway, when I saw it in the cutting room, I said, "Out". No explanations are necessary. In fact for the last ten minutes of the film, they don't need to say a word to each other. I do think that films, to a great degree, are re-written in the cutting room and this

was no exception. But I'm happy with the end. I don't think, however, that it is necessarily a 'happy ending' in the conventional sense. We don't know what kind of future these two people are heading towards.

**Q: What happens in your director's mind, after the story ends? If you were to do a sequel, where would you go with this?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

Well, we did discuss it symbolically. And of course it's impossible not to think about it as a metaphor. He carries with him all the global baggage of the problems of the Middle East. She carries with her the global baggage of the American abroad. And how are the two worlds going to meet? How are we going to survive, hand in hand? But I wanted to create characters that are not mere symbols of the global situation, not just representing an idea, and so I tried to make them living, breathing, and as complex as each and every one of us is. None of the characters in the film is representing only where they come from. They're not holding up a flag, saying Irish, American, or Arabic. I tried to create characters with contradiction in them, who are more than one thing, because that's what many of us are. Nonetheless, these two individuals do carry those layers of meaning. And whilst of course the global problems are certainly not something I as a screenwriter can solve, I did want to end the story on a note of hope.

In fact, as a general principle, I feel it to be my responsibility to end a film on a note of hope. It is a choice; but one which observably energises people. We think better, more creatively, and act more decisively from a perspective of hope than from one of despair.

**Q: Can we talk about the casting and the process of you and Joan working together?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

I think casting is the most important alchemical moment for a director in putting a film together. It's the single most important decision you make. I've learnt that over the years and now I really take time to get it right (and that puts some demands on the actors who I meet).

I had always enormously respected Joan Allen's delicate, serious, profound performances. She manages to hold a marvellous space where she's a film star, but she hasn't gone with the celebrity cult thing in the way that many have. She's a serious actor. She started out in theatre. She's an ensemble player; she loves to be part of a team, part of a group. And she has a very internal quality in her work. When I met her and she started to read, I realised that I had really found the one. There was something about her, not just her technical skills, not just her blondness, her blue-eyedness, which brings with it so much information, so much myth, so much iconography, but somebody who wanted to work from the inside out, and who was prepared to make herself soul-naked for the film - not flesh-naked, we don't need that, although we see some parts of her beautiful body - but the point is, she was

prepared to turn herself inside out to root the story and the character in her own life and therefore bring her alive for us. She was really a profound joy to work with.

**JOAN ALLEN:**

You have to feel a certain trust and faith in a person, a director, to feel like you can open yourself up that much and that is not always possible. Sally is really extraordinary in that regard. She sets up an atmosphere of such humanity and such interest in what the actors are thinking about, what they're wondering about the parts, what's possible, what isn't, should we try this, you know, let's try it, even if it may not work. There's such an embracing, non-judgemental quality to Sally that you feel, "I can try this, if it's the worst thing I have ever done, we may learn something, we may know not to go there, or we may find something that's really wonderful," and so it's a lot about Sally's own qualities of openness, not only in her work, but in her life as well.

You can get a sense of that quite immediately, when you meet a person, and I did when she came to my door in New York and we started talking about the script and the character. I knew Simon had already been cast and I knew that the chemistry between the two characters was critical (and if the chemistry didn't work then it shouldn't be me, you know, because without the chemistry between them, there's not a story.) And so we read one of the scenes. Sally was at my kitchen table and Simon was in Paris, and we read a scene over the speaker phone for the first time. Then he flew over, a day or two later, they came to my apartment and we worked for a few hours and read scenes which Sally put on tape and looked at later. Then Sally took us to a show called 'Def Poetry Jam', and she said, "The verse is really more like rap than Shakespeare, so think of it in that way". And the show was very much reflective of that quality, with all these wonderful young writers performing amazing rap poems. And Sally said "Would you do the film?", because she'd watched the footage and she felt that the chemistry between Simon and I was right. And I felt that it was right too.

**Q: How did you find Simon Abkarian?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

Simon lives in Paris. He's worked a lot in the theatre, particularly with Ariane Mnouchkine and the Théâtre du Soleil. He's performed the Greek tragedies, and Shakespeare, but before this film, he had done relatively little cinema. I first met him when he came to audition for a small part, as a gypsy, in 'The Man who Cried' and he made a big impression on me. When I started work on 'YES' I remembered him for his charisma, and his intensity, his intelligence and his presence. I asked him to come and read and thought he was quite, quite extraordinary. He has been a true and generous collaborator and companion throughout the development of the film and some parts of the narrative are based on stories he told me. This is his first lead role on film, and his first

major role in the English language, which is an incredible, astonishing achievement.

By the way, Simon is in fact Armenian, but from Beirut. And we went to Beirut together to look for locations and to deepen my research; to help me understand the background of his character in the story. We were going to shoot there, but just as we started filming, America invaded Iraq and we couldn't get insurance to cover the cast and crew. And then the Bush administration created a decree which made it impossible for Joan to go to Cuba. And so at the last minute we ended up shooting Beirut in Cuba and parts of Cuba in the Dominican Republic. That's film making for you.

**Q: Can you talk about the character of the husband, played by Sam Neill**

**SALLY POTTER:**

Sam tackled his part very courageously, because I think it's the most difficult part in the film. It's the apparently unsympathetic character, you know, the white, male, middle-aged man who's powerful, and who gets all the blame for everything. But we talked a lot about trying to find sympathy and compassion for the loneliness of that place and for his character, even though he may be doing and saying alienating things. There is a moment, for example, when he looks at himself in the mirror and talks about 'the ache of emptiness' and of course there is his air-guitar solo which reveals his hidden vulnerability and his crushed dreams of personal expression and freedom. I think we all felt very, very compassionate towards him. There are no bad characters in this story, as far as I'm concerned. They're just each in their own form of solitude or suffering.

**Q: Could you talk about the cleaning ladies?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

It's a very old device. It's the chorus in Greek tragedy. In a way the cleaner is the intermediary between us and the characters, between our experience and the film. And she's also the invisible witness, you know, the one that isn't noticed, but who sees it all. I tried to give a voice to each character in different ways and for different reasons, but hers is a particular voice, and one that is rarely heard.

In writing her part I got really involved in the metaphysics of dirt and in the lives of the hidden army of those that clean up after us, in our homes and on the planet, from birth onwards; first our mothers and then others - unintentional rhyme! I felt more and more in awe, actually, of the unacknowledged and undervalued under-class of cleaners and decided to try and make one who was the true philosopher and scientist of the piece. Actually, I believe working people are scientists and philosophers, but without college degrees. Anyway, the cleaner is the one who is not seen, but sees everything.

I also thought it was important that there was laughter in the film, and she is very funny. The deeper subject of East/West relations is so difficult and potentially heavy, that to have levity and permission to laugh with it, is a kind of necessary elixir.

**Q: I saw a thank you to John Berger in the credits. Can you explain why?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

John Berger, for those of you who may not know him, is a great, great writer who was born in England and now lives in France. He wrote 'G' and many other novels and is also very widely known as an art critic for his incredibly influential work, 'Ways of Seeing'. He's a poet, too, and he combines a poetic sensibility with personal and political integrity, always speaking out what he believes, from the heart. I've been fortunate enough to get to know him. I was too shy to approach him for many, many years. I'd been a huge fan and admirer of his, but didn't dare to write to him. I thought, "Why would he want to hear from me?" And then he saw 'The Tango Lesson' and wrote me a letter. I practically fell to the floor! Subsequently he has become both a friend and a mentor. He read several successive drafts of this script, and was very encouraging about it. And so my thanks are due to him and all like him, in this strange international kinship of soul-mates that one somehow finds. I'm sure there are many of you out there.

**Q: Were there any other thinkers and writers who inspired you?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

I think that the first writer who influenced this film was James Joyce. The title of the film is the last word of James Joyce's 'Ulysses', his great project of the stream of consciousness. I wanted similarly, to try to get inside my characters' heads and listen to what was there. I suppose I wanted to find some kind of cinematic equivalent to the stream of consciousness. In the end we spoke of the verse as a river! So Joyce was one major influence. But so were rap artists. And so were the cleaners that I've overheard talking, and guys walking down the street saying fucking this and fucking that and fucking this and fucking that. I wanted to find a way of bringing the music and rhythms of the speech of everyday life onto the screen. Because none of the words that people use in the film are particularly long, academic or complicated; it's very everyday speech; it's just how the words are arranged that is different.

**Q: The scene in the car garage, can you both talk about the creation of that from rehearsal into it's final form on the screen?**

**JOAN ALLEN:**

We rehearsed the scene in Sally's studio and then she would take Simon and me to different places and we would run the scene and see how it worked. In fact we went to three or four different car-parks. The

night when we finally filmed it was at the end of the shoot in London, right before we went to the Dominican Republic. Strangely, though I had felt so 'in the zone' for the whole shoot, I didn't particularly feel 'in the zone' that night. It seemed sort of problematic; the lights weren't really working, we were exhausted, we were all getting on a plane, like 24 hours later, but I think the exhaustion somehow was right. We had had a very emotional rehearsal of the scene around the table in rehearsal a few days before, where we all had cried a lot. We had talked about the various perspectives, like what they were each thinking and feeling and the frustration that they can't understand each other. We were all crying, and I think I had expected to try to get to that state again on the night we filmed it. And when it didn't happen, it ended up being the best thing. It was better that we did that round the table, rather than doing it in the actual scene. We had had the opportunity to go through it, and I think that although I wasn't very conscious of it, the exhaustion and the fragmented quality of the night lent itself to the scene, and underplaying some of the stuff was a lot better than going over the top with it. It was more effective.

**SALLY POTTER:**

That's exactly right. Sometimes you have to shed the tears in advance and work through your own feelings about the material in order to achieve a certain kind of transparency when you shoot it; which I think is exactly what Joan and Simon did. And I think restraint is sometimes much, much more powerful, when you've worked something through, as we had, than over the top expression.

**Q: I'm wondering about the scene when he goes back to Beirut. It felt like he had to return to his own roots before he could reach out to someone who had become the enemy. Is that right?**

**SALLY POTTER:**

One of the things that we talked about a lot in rehearsal, and also cried about together, actually, was the necessity to not only love, but also to respect difference. That means, of course, also accepting and taking responsibility for who and what you are. But the crucial element seems to be the act of listening, and in the act of listening, to others, understanding where they are coming from. We talked about that a lot about this when we were working on the long carpark/garage scene. And the notion of 'the enemy' is a complicated one; historically we can see that it sometimes is an invention, a fiction, to justify the apparatus of war and to keep the population in a docile state of fear. One war after another also creates a huge mobile population where people have been traumatically torn from their roots and become refugees. And I think that, in effect, each of the characters in the story is in their own kind of exile. All of us face the question of where 'home' is, especially now that we live in a globalised economy. Perhaps we each have to find our own roots and know where we're coming from before we can disengage and not over-identify with the nationalist part of our identity which ultimately divides us from others. Own it, love it, move on.

**Q: I thank you from the bottom of my heart for showing us this work of art. And I ask you from the tip of my tongue, what advice you have for us directors who are young?**

[AUDIENCE LAUGHTER]

**SALLY POTTER:**

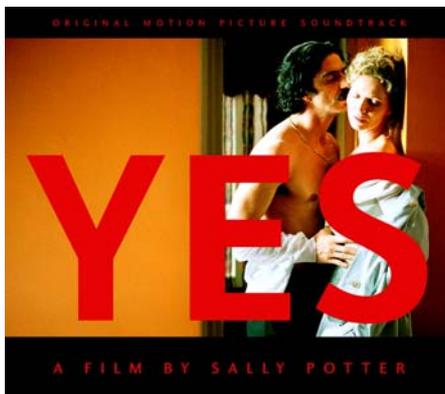
Don't give up. That's the first thing and the most important thing. Take risks. Don't play safe. Do what you really believe in, life is too short to do it for money or for anything else.



## WEBSITE

Read Sally Potter's YES Blog and online Q&As at:

[www.yesthemovie.com](http://www.yesthemovie.com)

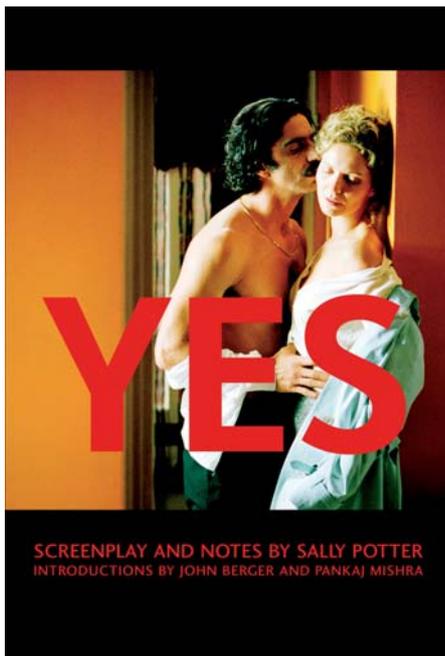


## SOUNDTRACK

YES Soundtrack is available on Deutsche Grammophon's EDGE label, distributed through Universal Music.

Contact Anne Olschewski:  
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