

From left Nico Mirallegro and Elliott Tittensor, photographed in the Middleton Rose Garden at The Langham, London

# UK STARS *of Tomorrow*

Introducing the rising talents among UK actors, writers and directors, who are destined to grace our screens for years to come. By **Fionnuala Halligan**

**T**he ninth annual Stars of Tomorrow showcases the hottest new acting and film-making talent emerging from the UK this year.

It's no easy task to whittle down the number to around 30 each year and our Stars curator Fionnuala Halligan spends several months sifting through short films, reels and submissions, gradually working out the final list.

There are some obvious shining candidates — our past Stars have included fast-

rising names such as Emily Blunt, James McAvoy, Carey Mulligan and Robert Pattinson — and others whose burgeoning talent is more subtle and raw and shows a promise of great things to come.

The UK talent pool is constantly refreshing itself and Halligan had hundreds of names to contend with this year. Through a process of consultation with producers, casting directors, agents, managers and other sources, she has come up with another group of stars-in-the-making des-

tined to grace our screens for years and decades to come.

Many thanks to The Langham, London, which graciously hosted the photoshoot for the event and which will host the Stars celebration party on July 4.

*Mike Goodridge, editor*

Photography by Yves Salmon at The Langham, London. Make-up by Debbie Finnegan for MAC. Lighting by Bowens International.



From left Tom Holland, Tom Harries and Karla Crome

#### NICO MIRALLEGRO AND ELLIOTT TITTENSOR (PICTURED PREVIOUS PAGE)

Co-starring in *Spike Island*, Mat Whitecross' new film about a group of teenagers obsessed with rock band The Stone Roses, Nico Mirallegro and Elliott Tittensor are also best friends off-screen, having grown up together in Heywood, Greater Manchester. It was Mirallegro who told Tittensor about the auditions for the film in the first place.

Tittensor is best known for playing Carl Gallagher in *Shameless*, and *Spike Island* is his big move into features. "It is the best job I've done in my life," says the irrepressible 22-year-old. "I really loved *Shameless* but I wanted to test myself."

Spotted by a casting director at school in Manchester, along with his identical twin brother Luke, Tittensor is now focusing "on grafting and trying to get myself another job. The next big thing is to spruce up my accent — I'd love something that isn't Mancunian."

Meanwhile, the 21-year-old Mirallegro (he has an Italian father) has been a busy lad of late as well — you may remember him as Johnny the boozy butler in the BBC's *Upstairs Downstairs*. He has also had parts in *Moving On* and *Exiles*. *Spike Island* is his big feature breakthrough, and is a far cry from his debut in TV soap *Hollyoaks* at the age of 15 when, he says: "I kept missing my mark because I didn't know what a mark was and I was too scared to ask."

Mirallegro's goal now is to "keep working, but on the right things; some nice dramas and a few good films to catch people's eye."

**Elliott Tittensor contacts** Mary FitzGerald and Lucy Johnson, Curtis Brown  
☎ +44 (0) 20 7393 4493  
✉ fitzgeraldjohnsonoffice@curtisbrown.co.uk

**Nico Mirallegro contact** Oriana Elia, The Rights House Talent  
☎ +44 (0) 20 3291 2929  
✉ oriana@therightshouse.com

#### TOM HOLLAND

Tom Holland sat his GCSEs and turned 16 last month. "I want to finish my childhood and enjoy it as much as I can, but there are so many things I want to do," he says.

Nothing unusual in that, but Holland is also on a professional roll. He has been cast — alongside fellow Star of Tomorrow George MacKay — in Kevin Macdonald's *How I Live Now*, co-star-

ring Saoirse Ronan, and is also due to attend the BRIT School — alma mater of Amy Winehouse and Adele — from September for a two-year course.

Aged 10, Holland was spotted in his dance-class showcase and invited to be part of *Billy Elliot* on stage. After six months of rehearsal he became the seventeenth Billy to perform the role at London's Victoria Palace Theatre (there are four Billys working at any one time). Holland trod the boards there for 18 months.

On finishing *Billy Elliot*, he signed with an agent and landed the key part of Lucas in Juan Antonio Bayona's harrowing drama *The Impossible*, opposite Naomi Watts and Ewan McGregor. Filmed in Alicante and Thailand and set around the 2004 South East Asian tsunami, hundreds of children auditioned for the role. Though the film has not yet been seen widely, Holland's performance has been stunning enough for WME to sign him up in the US as *The Impossible* gears up for an autumn awards run.

**Contact** Olivia Woodward, Curtis Brown  
☎ +44 (0) 20 7393 4484  
✉ woodwardoffice@curtisbrown.co.uk

#### TOM HARRIES

Tom Harries made a big impact in Marc Evans' *Hunky Dory*, as sexually confused teenager Evan opposite Minnie Driver and Aneurin Barnard (the film was shot during 21-year-old Harries' time at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, which he has since left). That was followed by a role in the BBC/HBO series *Parade's End*, based on the Ford Madox Ford novels, shooting in Belgium opposite Benedict Cumberbatch.

Now Harries is on stage in London in a revival of *Torch Song Trilogy*, directed by Douglas Hodge at the Menier Chocolate Factory. He is playing Alan, the role taken by Matthew Broderick in the original Harvey Fierstein film. "It's a cracking part," says Harries.

Cardiff-born Harries also sings, as *Hunky Dory* illustrates, starting off as a session musician in his father's band, but it's an actor's life for him.

"This has always been something I've loved doing. I'm lucky in that I've had a strong sense of direction all along," he says. "It's easier to go for something if you know you really want it."

**Contact** Abi Harris, Ken McReddie Associates  
☎ +44 (0) 20 7439 1456  
✉ abi@marcusevanskma.com

**KARLA CROME** (PICTURED PREVIOUS PAGE)

"She is really special," says one of the UK's leading casting directors of the 23-year-old actress Karla Crome. Special enough to land the coveted lead in the BBC2 drama *Murder*, directed by *The Killing's* Birger Larsen. "It's a direct-to-camera piece, almost," says Crome of the hard-won role. "He just puts the camera on you and clears the room, it's amazing."

Crome is from a determinedly non-showbiz family — her mother is a nurse and her father a plumber — and she studied at London's Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts and was part of the National Youth Theatre, for which she wrote the play *If Chloe Can*, which was staged at London's Lyric Theatre.

In addition to *Murder*, Crome can currently be seen as Mia, the 16-year-old caretaker of hit-man/woman Chloe Sevigny's extended family in Sky Atlantic/Red Production Company's *Hit And Miss*.

The actress is now shooting the next series of TV drama *Misfits*. She plans to continue writing to flesh out the acting gigs. "In the last year, it has all blown up," she admits. "Until then, the work came in and out and it was never as consistent as it is now. Things definitely seem to be changing."

**Contact** Michael Duff, Troika Talent  
+44 (0) 20 7336 7868  
michael@troikatalent.com

**DANIEL RIGBY**

It has been a fast and furious year for talented actor and stand-up-comic Daniel Rigby. After winning a TV Bafta for his role as the young Eric Morecambe in the well-received drama *Eric And Ernie*, Rigby started out in the role of Alan Dangle in Nicholas Hytner's production of *One Man, Two Guvnors* at the National Theatre. It has become a runaway success that played to packed houses, transferred to the West End, and finds itself a Tony award-winner on Broadway.

"It's going brilliantly," he says from New York. "If anything, the reaction here has been even more effusive than in the UK. Now we just have to wait and see if people buy tickets."



Rigby may be on Broadway for a while yet but the 29-year-old graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) has never had "a grand plan — I like to take things as they come".

He would, however, like to return at some point to his stand-up and writing, something which has been on the back burner with nightly performances of his show. "Winning the Bafta felt like things have changed, but I've been in the show since then so I can't really say," he says. "It will be interesting to see what happens next."

**Contact** Lydia Hampson, PBJ Management  
+44 (0) 20 7287 1112  
Lydia@pbjmanagement.co.uk

**PAUL BRANNIGAN**

Glasgow-born Paul Brannigan shares a lot with Robbie, the young man he plays in Ken Loach's Cannes jury prize-winner *The Angels' Share*. They have both experienced difficult times, including a fractured childhood and a stint in prison; they have both got that broad, broad Glaswegian accent; and they both have an uncanny ability to turn things around.

Since coming out of jail in 2007, 25-year-old Brannigan has worked on community youth programmes tackling a range of subjects from alcohol awareness to knife crime, often engaging his students in role play. That is where Loach's collaborator, Paul Laverty, found him. But Brannigan took some coaxing into auditions with casting director Kathleen Crawford.

"I was at a low point in my life," he recalls. "I had lost my job at the community centre. I was on my arse. I had nothing."

Laverty pushed and so did Crawford. "He has a presence," she says. "He has a twinkle and the camera loves him. He has a complete willingness to do what he needs to do, to leave his doubts at the door. Paul has seen one side of the world and he's really not scared about things."

Brannigan has not hesitated for a second since. After *The Angels' Share* comes a role in Jonathan Glazer's *Under The Skin* with Scarlett Johansson. "I'm raring to go now," he says.

**Contact** Olivia Woodward, Curtis Brown  
+44 (0) 20 7393 4484  
woodwardoffice@curtisbrown.co.uk

**ASHLEY THOMAS**

Ashley Thomas — aka Bashy — has three films coming out this year, to complete his full set of showbiz credentials. Born in London, the 27-year-old Thomas was fixated on theatre as a kid, studied it to GCSE level and attended the BRIT School. Then music came to the fore, with Thomas' natural talent for hip hop and grime emerging to make a big impact in the UK, in particular with his 2007 track 'Black Boys' and album *Catch Me If You Can*.

Thomas then moved to the big screen, starting out in *Shank* in 2010. This year should see him make a real impact on that front, with key roles in *Cockneys Vs Zombies* and *My Brother The Devil*, and the lead in boxing drama *The Man Inside* opposite Peter Mullan, due out in the autumn via Kaleidoscope.

Thomas is now writing a screenplay and working on new material for a potential album, and an EP is coming out this summer.

"Not many people have overnight success," he notes. "It is a lot of hard work. People ask me which would I sacrifice, film, music, theatre, if I had to. My answer is none. I'll sacrifice sleep as opposed to any of them. I love them all the same, in different ways."

**Contact** Deborah Wiley, Independent Talent Group  
+44 (0) 20 7636 6565  
deborahwiley@independenttalent.com

**LENORA CRICHLLOW**

Lenora Crichlow sprints onto the big screen in this month's *Fast Girls*, an enjoyable pre-Olympic UK 'girl power' feature most notable for the warmth of her presence as its lead. Off-screen, however, it has been a long-distance effort for this native Londoner.

Playing lonely ghost Annie in the BBC3 supernatural drama/comedy *Being Human* has won Crichlow some devoted fans, while other television roles have gained her attention including the part of Sugar in the adaptation of Julie Burchill's *Sugar Rush*, and she had a central role in the expensive BBC drama *Material Girls*.

Having just wrapped *Doors Open*, a TV film based on the Ian Rankin novel and co-starring Stephen Fry, it is now time for 27-year-old Crichlow to act out her ambitions on a bigger stage. Trained at the YoungBlood Theatre Company at Hammersmith's Riverside Studios, Crichlow has been with her agent since he spotted her in a school play aged 11.

"I have always performed," she says. "It is what I did as a kid. There's footage of me aged two, dressing up and putting on a show. And it's all I want to do now. I don't want to limit myself. I want to do more big-screen work. I'm open to opportunities and we'll see what happens."

**Contact** Andrew Braidford, The BWH Agency  
+44 (0) 20 7734 0657  
andrew@thebwhagency.co.uk

**IAIN DE CAESTECKER**

"I don't think too far ahead," says 24-year-old Scotland-born Iain de Caestecker (the name signals his father's Belgian ancestry). But the future is looking good for the actor who has had an agent since he was spotted in drama class as a child.

With four eagerly anticipated UK films out shortly, from art film *Shell*, directed by former Star of Tomorrow Scott Graham, to Jeremy Lovering's thriller *In Fear*, as well as roles in *Filth*, based on Irvine Welsh's novel, and black comedy *The Comedian*, De Caestecker is now making the move from TV to film.

You may have seen him as the »



From left Paul Brannigan, Ashley Thomas and Lenora Crichlow

Photographed in the Artesian Bar at The Langham, London

charming titular vet in *Young James Herriot* for the BBC, which lines him up as a national-treasure-in-waiting. Now filming the supernatural thriller *The Secret Of Crickley Hall* for the BBC, De Caestecker is on the brink of bigger things. "I've always had a romantic notion about wanting to be in films," he says. Four in a year seems like more than a notion.

**Contact** Christopher Farrar, Hamilton Modell  
 ☎ +44 (0) 20 7636 1221  
 ✉ christopher@hamiltonmodell.co.uk

### LETITIA WRIGHT

Arriving in London with her mother at the age of six, Guyana-born Letitia Wright first fell in love with acting at her Finsbury Park primary school when she got the opportunity to play a young Rosa Parks onstage.

"I felt so comfortable," she recalls. "I even did the whole American accent!"

Now an outgoing 18 and sitting her A-level exams, Wright has chased her passion with a passion. Drama school every Saturday was followed by sending her self-made tape to every agent in London until she finally got a callback.

Small parts in the long-running BBC TV drama *Holby City* were followed by a strong impact in last year's Channel 4 drama *Top Boy*, and Wright displayed a graceful ease in Sally El Hosaini's urban drama *My Brother The Devil*.

After she finishes her exams, bigger things will almost certainly follow. "I will definitely be going to drama school," she says. "I will definitely be getting a degree. I've made a conscious decision that I'm in this to do good work and I want a long career. I want to be respected." She's already there.

**Contact** Femi Oguns, Identity Agency Group  
 ☎ +44 (0) 20 7470 8711  
 ✉ femi@identityagencygroup.com

### AIYSHA HART

Her mother hails from Liverpool and her father is from Saudi Arabia, where Aiysha Hart lived for a short while as a child.

"I remember coming back to the UK and into primary school, and being hit by the idea of drama and the drama society," Hart recalls. "It was all new to me and it's where I felt at ease, where I got all my confidence from."

Now 24 and raised mostly in Surrey, Hart studied English literature and film at King's College London and followed



From left Iain De Caestecker, Letitia Wright, Aiysha Hart and George MacKay

that with a year-long acting class before nabbing a prime role opposite Paddy Considine in Shan Khan's contemporary thriller *Honour*.

Shot on the Isle of Man and in London from a screenplay that was on the Brit List of best unproduced screenplays, *Honour* sees Hart in the juicy part of a girl on the run, in fear of her life from an honour killing.

"I had just graduated and this was my first role. I could hardly believe it," she says. "I am very new to all this. All I can hope is that it keeps going this well."

**Contact** Kate Bryden, Gordon and French  
 ✉ kate@gordonandfrench.net  
 ☎ +44 (0) 20 7734 4818

### GEORGE MACKAY

Just 21, George MacKay has been gracing screens for over a decade, ever since a casting director spotted him as a 10-year-old on a visit to his London school. The result was a part in PJ Hogan's *Peter Pan*, eight months in Australia, and the beginnings of a passion.

"As I learned more about it, it became more and more what I wanted to do," says MacKay. "Now it's impossible to think of doing anything else."

MacKay is widely regarded as a film-star-in-waiting. "He's just so talented," says one casting director. "It's not a question of 'if', but 'when'."

His parts have been growing in stature as well. MacKay has been cast opposite Saoirse Ronan and fellow Star of Tomorrow Tom Holland in Kevin Macdonald's *How I Live Now*, and has shot the lead in indie project *Private Peaceful* for director Pat O'Connor with Richard Griffiths and Frances de la Tour.

He is also set to appear in the TV film *Best Of Men*, about the founding of the Paralympics, and in the low-budget film *Breakfast With Jonny Wilkinson*, based on a play at the Menier Chocolate Factory.

"I just want to work consistently and try as many things as I can," he says.

**Contact** Donna French, Gordon&French  
 ☎ +44 (0) 20 7734 1818  
 ✉ donna@gordonandfrench.net

### JAMES FLOYD

Not many people drop out of the London School of Economics to pursue their dream as an actor. Still, 26-year-old Londoner James Floyd was able to teach maths while he struggled through »

Photographed in the Grand Ballroom at The Langham, London



From left James Floyd and Trystan Gravelle

some tough early years (“You’ve got to go through the grinder, take a few hits, a few emotional tumbles, to be any good in this line of work,” he says). People who see him convince as the troubled Rash in Sally El Hosaini’s extraordinary drama *My Brother The Devil* won’t understand why the talented Floyd has ever struggled, but he says his unusual, flexible heritage initially made it tougher to find work.

With a blond-haired father and a Singaporean mother of Malaysian and Indian descent, Floyd has played everything from British to Spanish, Indian and now, in *My Brother The Devil*, a British Arab. “I don’t feel I have a race or culture,” he says. “That’s why London makes sense to me.”

As for *My Brother The Devil*, “It is the first time

in my career I was overly confident,” he admits. “I knew this was a special film.”

With formal training from the National Youth Theatre and a RADA summer course at the Old Vic, Floyd will be seen soon in the BBC drama *The Best Possible Taste* playing Freddie Mercury to Oliver Lansley’s Kenny Everett. He has also shot the thriller *Rearview* as well as Sky Atlantic’s *The Blind Man Of Seville*, in which he plays a bull-fighter.

“It is really shaping up this year,” says Floyd, and to underline that, he has just signed with UTA in Los Angeles.

**Contact** Peter Brooks, Creative Artists Management  
+44 (0) 20 7292 0600  
pb@cam.co.uk

#### TRYSTAN GRAVELLE

“I wasn’t a horrible child,” says the effortlessly charming Welsh actor Trystan Gravelle. “I just got up to no good like anyone else.” Drama was, of course, the answer and he certainly turned out to be talented at it. Gravelle won a scholarship to RADA, and went to the Royal Shakespeare Company after graduation for three years, followed by a lengthy stint at The Globe. Gravelle has already performed many of the stage’s great roles to acclaim — there is no doubt anyone who has performed Hamlet at the RSC can act. But he has never had time to crack film, until now. Gravelle has followed up a role as Christopher Marlowe in Roland Emmerich’s *Anon-ymous* by landing a coveted part as the young British lead (“a social climber, a ladies’ man”) opposite

Jeremy Piven in ITV’s drama series *Mr Selfridge*, currently shooting around London. He has just signed with William Morris Endeavor in Los Angeles and says, modestly: “I couldn’t be any happier really, with the way things are going.”

**Contact** Grant Parsons, Curtis Brown  
+44 (0) 20 7393 4464  
parsonsoffice@curtisbrown.co.uk



#### YUSRA WARSAMA

She has casting directors’ hearts-a-flutter with her combination of Somali heritage and Manchester theatrical background.

Yusra Warsama is “unique and exciting”, says one casting expert.

Born in the UAE to a Somali nomad mother and Yemeni father, Warsama came to a “terraced house in rainy Manchester” in 1986, aged 18 months.

“Hearing and understanding the Somali language and heritage growing up in Manchester meant I had to negotiate between two cultures — and that has made me who I am,” she says.

A quiet child, she grew up writing (she is also a

playwright and a poet) and was heavily influenced by her time at the Contact Theatre in Manchester and its director John McGrath, who now heads the National Theatre of Wales. In 2010 Warsama made the decision to focus on acting; her first credit was a compelling turn in Justin Chadwick’s BBC drama *Stolen* opposite Damian Lewis.

Now she has landed a key role in Focus Features’ Jordan and UK-shot sci-fi thriller *Last Days On Mars* opposite Liev Schreiber, Romola Garai and 2011 Star of Tomorrow Tom Cullen. Warsama says: “I spent my first days in rehearsal wondering, ‘Is this really happening, or am I having an out-of-body experience?’”

**Contact** Lindy King, Julia Charteris, United Agents  
+44 (0) 20 3214 0800  
jcharteris@unitedagents.co.uk

#### SAMANTHA BARKS

The 21-year-old Isle of Man-born singer/actress Samantha Barks has enjoyed a stellar trajectory. At the age of 16, she moved to London by herself and ranked third in reality TV show *I’d Do Anything*, trying out for the role of Nancy in Andrew Lloyd-Webber’s stage production of *Oliver!*. Barks was later offered the role of Eponine in the long-run-



ning London stage production of *Les Misérables*, and was chosen to perform it at the show’s 25th anniversary performance at the vast O2 Arena. Barks won the part again in Tom Hooper’s anticipated film version for Working Title Films, after a gruelling 15-week casting process and despite reported competition from Taylor Swift. She stars opposite Hugh Jackman and Russell Crowe. “I wanted the part more than anything in my life,” she admits.

Barks says she has loved the move from stage to screen, revelling in the “freedom [of] it being so intimate, playing that heartache as if you were sitting in front of me. Yet you walk onto a set and it’s a full street in Paris. It’s both smaller and bigger than I ever dreamed it.” Inspired by Jackman’s stage-screen career, Barks hopes to line up more film. “I haven’t stopped since the age of 16,” she says. “And it suits me that way. I love it.”

**Contact** Kirk Whelan-Foran, United Agents  
+44 (0) 20 3214 0800  
kwhelan-foan@unitedagents.co.uk

CREATIVE SKILLSET IS  
PROUD TO SUPPORT THE

## SCREEN INTERNATIONAL UK STARS OF TOMORROW

We wish them every success  
in their future careers.

ABIGGER  
FUTURE2

A Bigger Future 2:  
Skills. Jobs. Action.

www.ABiggerFuture2.co.uk



Awarding funds from  
The National Lottery®

creative  
skillset

Photographed in the Infinity Suite at The Langham, London

From left Henrietta Ashworth, Dominic Buchanan, Daniel Wolfe and Jessica Ashworth



## JESSICA AND HENRIETTA ASHWORTH

### Screenwriters

“It is like a hive mind,” explain 24-year-old twin screenwriting sisters Jessica and Henrietta Ashworth. Or at least Henrietta explains, and Jessica agrees. Their script *Olivia And Jim*, a road-trip comedy-drama, came joint third on the 2011 Brit List and has been optioned for development by Diarmuid McKeown, the former managing director of Cloud Eight Films, for his new set-up Equation Pictures.

“One of us comes up with an idea and tells the other,” says Henrietta of their technique. “I don’t think we would do it without each other.”

Jessica adds: “It is a relaxing way to write, with

your twin. We don’t have to explain things to each other.”

They have always written together, says Henrietta, and completed their first feature spec *The Shakespeare Club* when they were 15. Jessica also works as an actress, and will next be seen in John Osborne’s *The Devil Inside Him* at the White Bear Theatre in London, whereas Henrietta “just wants to be a screenwriter”. To that end, she has received the prestigious Arts and Humanities Research Council Award to begin a Masters in film at University College London this year. The pair have also been picked up for US representation by Jenny Maryasis at UTA. And they will continue writing together: “We bring separate things to the

table as we grow up,” explains Jessica. “But we still have that hive mind working.”

**Contact** Camille McCurry, United Agents

☎ +44 (0) 20 3214 0803

✉ cmccurry@unitedagents.co.uk

## DOMINIC BUCHANAN

### Producer

Young producer Dominic Buchanan has just joined commercials and content company Stink Films as their head of film, marking a swift rise for the 30-year-old London native. Having produced the Cannes Un Certain Regard title *Gimme The Loot*, which won the grand jury prize at this year’s South By Southwest, Buchanan is also »

independently producing Film London's Microwave-backed feature *Lilting*, to be directed by Hong Khaou, whose screenplay was joint third on last year's BritList. Previously Buchanan worked at The Weinstein Company as an assistant and Universal Pictures International in acquisitions, and also at Qwerty Films. Now, at Stink, he will be working with former Stars of Tomorrow Jonathan Entwistle and Claire Wilson on their drama *Meeting A Soldier*, among other projects.

Contact ✉ dominic.buchanan@gmail.com

**DANIEL WOLFE** (PICTURED PREVIOUS PAGE)

**Writer-director**

In the promo for The Shoes' internet sensation 'Time to Dance', an intense Jake Gyllenhaal pulls an *American Psycho* on east London's dance scene in a grim yet compelling music video-meets-short-film. The man behind it is Manchester-born director Daniel Wolfe, who writes with his brother Matthew. Their screenplay *Catch Me Daddy* is in development at Film4, with Mike Elliott set to produce through his Emu Films.

Shooting is set for Yorkshire this autumn, with StudioCanal discussing the acquisition of UK rights and Ben Drew (aka Plan B) attached to star. Wolfe has a strong relationship with the musician and director, having shot the award-winning video series for Plan B's *The Defamation Of Strickland Banks* album. Though signed to Partizan in 2006 (and Somesuch & Co in 2010), 32-year-old Wolfe still felt compelled to return to study, graduating with an MA in screenwriting from the Royal Holloway University of London in 2009.

Wolfe started his working life as a chef in Manchester. It was while travelling in Vietnam that he saw a poster about Philip Noyce's *The Quiet American* and joined the film's production department. And it is only in the past decade that Wolfe has worked his way up from being a runner in Soho to where he is now, "primed and ready to go".

Contact Josh Varney, Independent Talent Group  
+44 (0) 20 7636 6565  
✉ joshvarney@independenttalent.com

**MUSTAPHA KSEIBATI**

**Director**

Mustapha Kseibati is utterly focused on finishing his first feature script, hoping

Photographed in the Infinity Suite at The Langham, London



From left Mustapha Kseibati, William McGregor, Jamie Stone and David Leon

to "crack it by Christmas," he says. In development with *Between The Eyes*, it is a teen horror comedy, but if you want to know more about Kseibati's sensibility, look no further than the fact his all-time favourite film is *Back To The Future*.

"I love films that have a sense of fun, action and adventure but with a dramatic core," he says. "I'm passionate about films that have positive messages for kids, but not in a way that's rammed down their throats."

Kseibati's second short film, *Skateboards And Spandex* (backed by B3 Media and the now-defunct UK Film Council), is being developed with the BBC and Little Comet as a family comedy in the vein of *Malcolm In The Middle*. His first short was called *Big Tingz*, also with B3, and his third and most recent, *Painkiller*, was made with B3 and the BBC Writersroom.

Kseibati, who suffered severe asthma as a child, estimates he spent "10 hours a day watching TV in my bed for 10 years. I'm very receptive to that sense of the magic of movies."

He has been selected for this year's Creative Skillset-backed Guiding Lights scheme, where he will be mentored by Paul Andrew Williams.

Contact Amanda Davis and Sam Greenwood, Curtis Brown  
+44 (0) 20 7393 4484  
✉ amanda@curtisbrown.co.uk

**WILLIAM MCGREGOR**

**Writer-director**

Talented young director William McGregor started out brandishing a camera on the farm in rural Norfolk where he grew up, making a film about piglets at the age of 16.

By 19, he had completed fantasy short *Who's Afraid Of The Watersprite?* in his second year at the University for the Creative Arts. The Cambridge International Student Film Festival later renamed itself the Watersprite Film Festival in its honour.

"I was naive, to an extent," McGregor recalls. "We went out to Slovenia and shot this ambitious fairy tale. In a way I'm trying to get back to that now."

Still only 24 and working full-time at The Mill shooting commercials, McGregor is readying his first feature, *The Rising*, with producer Hilary Bevan Jones, which is backed by the BFI. Set in Industrial Revolution-era Wales, the »



Photographed in the Infinity Suite at The Langham, London

film is about two sisters “trying to deal with a world which is set against them”.

McGregor is still making short films, though, and is a particular fan of the Sci-Fi London 48-hour film challenge, where he has submitted some outstanding entries over the last two years. “I didn’t really start out thinking of this as a career, but I’ve enjoyed it and nobody is telling me to stop,” he says.

**Contact** Jennie Miller, Independent Talent Group  
+44 (0) 20 7636 6565  
jenniemiller@independenttalent.com

**JAMIE STONE** (PICTURED PREVIOUS PAGE)

**Writer-director**

Jamie Stone has just been nominated for a Student Academy Award for his National Film and Television School (NFTS) graduation short *Skyborn*. So when he says “there has been a fantastic response from all comers”, since the screening, he is not exaggerating.

Though he was signed by an agency on the back of his first-year short *Sh-boom*, interest in Stone has skyrocketed since *Skyborn*, much like the Gilliam-like aircraft at its centre. Stone describes the short as “rustic sci-fi”. It is “*Mad Max* post-apocalyptic but more British, so wet, and includes a lot of strategic fog because we had no money”.

*Skyborn*, based around the Icarus myth, was a terrifically ambitious undertaking, and it could have fallen flat. But 26-year-old Stone displayed such a confident grip on his story that he made it all look seamless.

Now the film-maker, with his fine-art background — Stone was artist-in-residence at the Henderson Gallery in Edinburgh, then studied film at Edinburgh College of Art — is focused on how to turn *Skyborn* into a feature, the largest and “most realistic” project on his plate right now.

His father is the film-maker Norman Stone, so he has been exposed to film all his life. “I have no illusions this is an easy way to make a living, but it has always looked like a lot of fun,” he says.

With a strong interest in anima-

documentaries, and he only started writing “by accident” at the NFTS when it came time to produce *Skyborn*. That’s one happy accident, and one he looks set to continue.

**Contact** Jago Irwin  
jagoirwin@independenttalent.com  
+44 (0) 20 7636 6565

**DAVID LEON** (PICTURED PREVIOUS PAGE)

**Actor-writer-director**

The most recognisable face in the Stars of Tomorrow line-up of film-makers due to his success as an actor, David Leon is making a noise these days behind the camera.

From the short film *Father*, which he co-wrote, to last year’s showstopper *Man And Boy*, which won the best narrative short award at the Tribeca Film Festival, 32-year-old Newcastle-born Leon has been commanding attention on an international level.

“I have been forging this path in a single-minded, doggedly determined way,” he says. “You’ve got to really prove yourself — you’ve got to produce exceptional work for people to listen. I’ve been careful to try to make quality over quantity”.

Now Leon is ready to make the next step with his first full-length feature *Driven*, which he hopes will shoot in Newcastle and Northumberland in early 2013. Damian Lewis, Jessica Brown Findlay and Peter Capaldi are set to star in this gritty drama loosely based on Leon’s own childhood experiences.

Photographer Rankin’s Rankin Film is attached as executive producer. Leon starred in Rankin’s *The Lives Of The Saints*. “People I’ve worked with as an actor have had a belief in me and a willingness to get involved,” he says.

Leon is also working on a 20-minute short called *Orthodox* and he is on UK TV screens in the ITV detective drama *Vera*.

“One of the reasons I wanted to become an actor was that I was in love with storytelling,” he says. “I have been inspired by film my whole life and I want to touch people in the same way”.

**Contact** Curtis Brown  
+44 (0) 20 7393 4493  
cb@curtisbrown.co.uk



**KIBWE TAVARES**

**Writer-director**

Do yourself a favour and take a look at the (very) short film *Robots Of Brixton* on Vimeo. It has had more than 250,000 hits so you won’t be the only one taken aback by Kibwe Tavares’ accomplished final project for his Masters degree in architecture (he also holds a Masters in engineering). *Robots* caused something of a stir in architecture circles when it won the RIBA silver medal — the highest accolade for a student architect — but it has set Tavares firmly on the path of a film-making career.

“It was my final thesis, self-funded, and I worked on it for six to seven months,” recalls the south London-born and based founder of animation collective Factory Fifteen.

In addition to the prestigious RIBA prize, *Robots* — which was inspired by 28-year-old Tavares’ reflections on the riots in Brixton in 1981 and 1985 and their effect on the black community — won the special jury award for animation at the Sundance Film Festival earlier this year.

Now he is shooting his second short, *Jonah*, written with former Star of Tomorrow Jack Thorne and produced by Ivana MacKinnon for Film4, BFI and Shine Pictures. This semi-mythical story about tourism and the world’s biggest fish is being shot on location in Zanzibar and is a live-action affair with digital animation and set extensions. “I didn’t plan on being a film-maker,” he admits. “But doing *Robots* made me understand it’s the perfect thing for me.”

**Contact** Anthony Mestriner, Casarotto Ramsay & Associates  
+44 (0) 20 7287 4450  
anthony@casarotto.co.uk

**RUTH FOWLER**

**Writer**

“I have this really bad reputation,” says Fowler with a laugh. “People Google me and they aren’t sure what to expect when they meet me”.

Well, she does call herself a ‘sociopathic narcissist’ on her website. Once upon a time, a down-on-her-luck Fowler wrote a book (*Girl, Undressed*) about her experiences as a stripper in New York, but that luck has changed now and this Los Angeles-based, UK-focused Cambridge University graduate from Wales is finding she has the right reputation with all the right people.

A devoted and passionate gonzo-style journalist and blogger (she is fully behind the Occupy movement), Fowler wrote a sparkling screenplay called *Fly Me* for Park Entertainment about airline entrepreneur Freddie Laker, which made her fans in the film industry. Now she is about to start adapting Marina Lewycka’s bestselling book *A Short History Of Tractors In Ukrainian* for Ruby Films and the BBC.

Fowler has also finished working with Matt Jones (*Shameless*) on the pilot for an original series with the working title *Talent* for Company Television and Sky. She is also adapting Terence Blacker’s novella *Boy2girl* as a teen musical for Kindle Entertainment. She has stories of her own as well. “I grew up in a tiny little town in Wales, with one bus going out of there,” says 32-year-old Fowler, who travelled the world working as a “chef on yachts for rich people”.

“I wanted to be a writer but I didn’t have any life experience. Some writers live in an imaginary world, but I like to go out and see and do things. I spend six months out there, then I go back into reclusive mode.”

**Contact** Charlotte Kelly, Casarotto Ramsay & Associates  
+44 (0) 20 7287 4450  
charlotte@casarotto.co.uk

**MAHALIA BELO**

**Writer-director**

Mahalia Belo, known as May, graduated this year from the NFTS with the short *Volume*. It is a stunning, take-notice debut in which the London-born director creates an exquisite, haunting suburban world and »



marries it to a dreamy but always-menacing drama.

"The attention to the aesthetic was very important — it was almost there before the film," Belo explains.

Working with an all-female crew, in particular writer Ingeborg Topsoe (with whom she continues to collaborate), cinematographer Chloe Thompson and production designer Laura Tarrant-Brown, Belo believes in "building a world and finding the story within it." She adds: "The best things I've done have been from a feeling or an image."

The results, which also include the NFTS's first 3D film *Thea*, have been arresting enough to draw Film4 as collaborators on developing *Volume* into a feature. She is also writing a thriller with Topsoe called *Stockholm*, and is in talks on various other projects.

A graduate of London's Central Saint Martins (Fine Art 4D), Belo came into directing through the art department before moving to the NFTS and is an experienced animator. The 30-year-old says she has "an off-the-wall background — but everything has really helped me get this far".

**Contact** Roxana Adle, Independent Talent Group  
 ☎ +44 (0) 20 7636 6565  
 ✉ roxana@independenttalent.com

**FYZAL BOULIFA** (PICTURED PREVIOUS PAGE)

**Writer-director**

In *The Curse*, Fyzal Boulifa's latest short film (supported by Film4 and the BFI Film Fund) which shot in Morocco and took the top short-film prize at Directors' Fortnight in Cannes, a young village girl is watched by a local boy as she lies with her older lover. What happens next deals mostly with power and destiny. He describes it as a "pitch-black fairy tale" but Boulifa's approach is clean, simple and haunting. Preferring to use non-actors, this largely self-taught Leicester native (of Moroccan descent) has dealt largely with issues of cultural and sexual alienation and identity in shorts from *Afternoon* (2007) to *Whore* (2009) and *Burn My Body* (2010).

"I have felt a bit in limbo, caught in between cultures, growing up in the Midlands," he explains. "The characters in my films are often the same way"

Now, with *The Curse* just finished, 28-year-old Boulifa says he is ready to make the leap into feature films — ini-

tially to be set in the UK, but he also has ideas for Morocco and the wider Middle East. "I am not officially in development yet, but I'm close," he says.

**Contact** ✉ fyzalboulifa@gmail.com

**ANNEMARIE LEAN-VERCOE**

**Cinematographer**

The lush vistas of UK thriller *Wreckers* saw cinematographer Annemarie Lean-Vercoe move into dramatic feature lensing last year to universal acclaim. A 2003 graduate of the NFTS, Lean-Vercoe will now shoot her second feature, supernatural thriller *The Girl In The Corn*, for director Laura Smith and producer Kwesi Dickson this autumn. She is also helping prep *This Family*, the new film from *Wreckers* director DR Hood.

The talented Lean-Vercoe is also working on a documentary about London-based charity Kids Company for Humane Pictures, with Mat Whitecross. The two previously worked together on the 2010 documentary *Moving To Mars*.

A graduate of Central Saint Martins' foundation art course with a degree from the London College of Printing before entering the NFTS, Lean-Vercoe served an apprenticeship as trainee camera assistant on features including *Tomb Raider*, where she recalls "making a lot of tea for the cameraman and running around with boxes".

Being a female cinematographer in a male-dominated field has its advantages, she says. "I look at reality with a slightly different, lyrical perspective," she suggests. "And with documentaries, I've been sensitively and discreetly able to build trust with people, to go into their lives and see things that would normally be behind closed doors."

**Contact** ✉ leanvercoe@hotmail.com

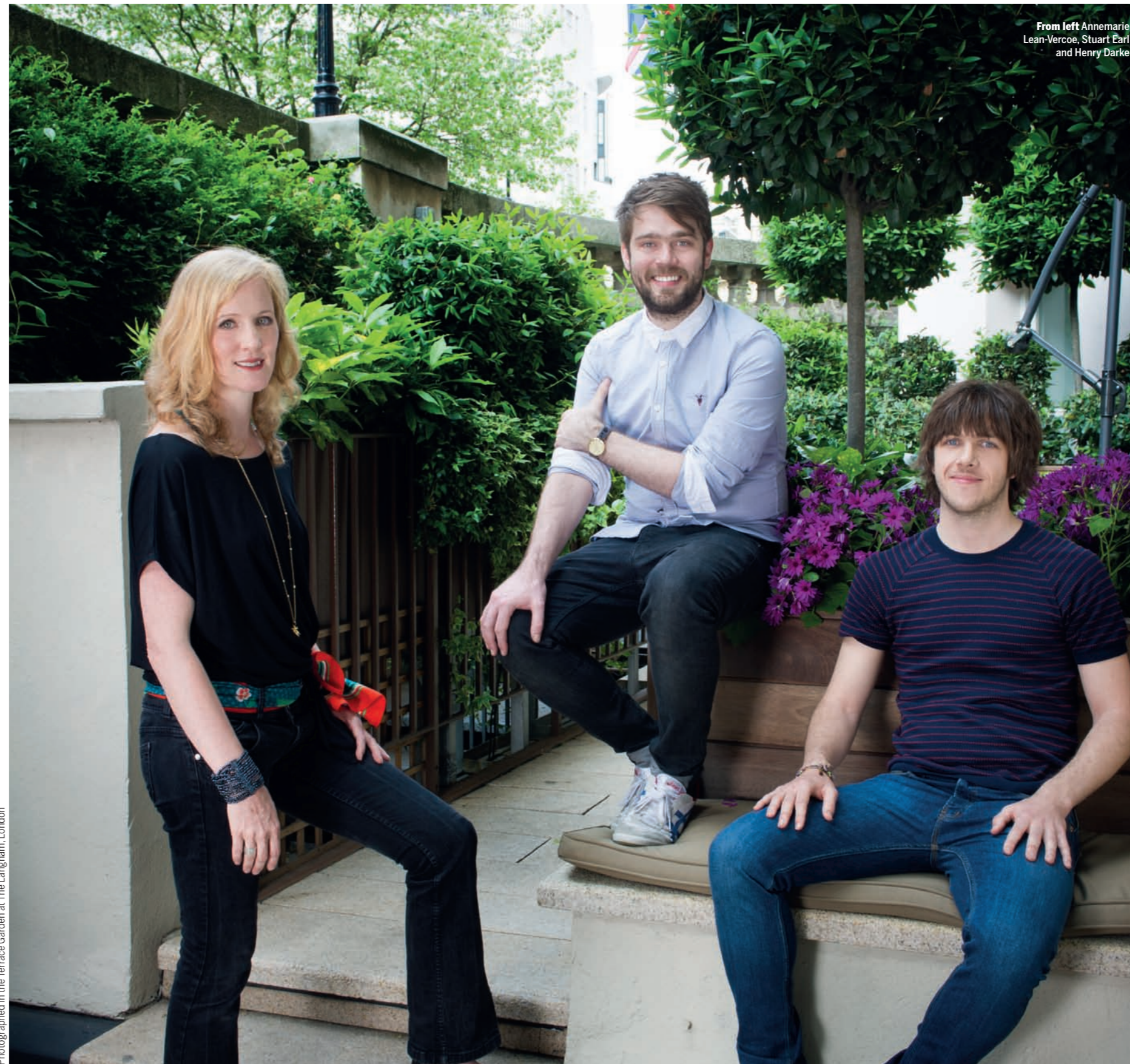
**STUART EARL**

**Composer**

The first film composer to feature in Stars of Tomorrow, South London-born Stuart Earl comes from a non-musical background.

He explains he started out playing the clarinet at school, and only picked up the guitar to "woo girls". But he became serious about music as a teenager. Very serious. Earl studied music theory at Oxford University where he encountered the work of George Fenton, whose daughter attended the same college.

"Naively, I left uni thinking, 'Oh maybe I'll try my hand at that,'" recalls



From left Annemarie Lean-Vercoe, Stuart Earl and Henry Darke

Photographed in the Terrace Garden at The Langham, London

the 30-year-old. A struggle to break in followed but Earl hit his mark at the NFTS where he was signed to United Agents at his graduation screening three years ago. Since then Earl has picked up a Creative Skillset-backed Trailblazer award at the Edinburgh International Film Festival in 2009 for his work on varied features and shorts. Standouts include his scores for *By The Grace Of God, In Our Name* and, most recently, *My Brother The Devil* alongside the last of the three instalments of TV drama *Black Mirror*.

Earl is now composing his first music for theatre, for *A Doll's House* at the Young Vic, and preparing a five-part BBC TV drama. "Music can easily destroy a film," he says. "You have to be sensitive and I think I've found a way to understand how it can work together. I love performing music but the interesting part is creating, arranging, writing. Film is the most collaborative way to do it, which is what I love about this job."

**Contact** Silvia Llaguno, United Agents  
 ☎ +44 (0) 20 3214 0901  
 ✉ sllaguno@unitedagents.co.uk

**HENRY DARKE**

**Writer-director**

A graduate of the London Film School — which he attended on a Creative Skillset bursary — film-maker Henry Darke is readying his first feature *Big Mouth*, based on his 2010 short of the same name. Set in Cornwall — or "underneath the chocolate box side of Cornwall" — it is about a "deaf boy who is trying to keep his family together; the more he tries, the more the opposite happens".

*Big Mouth* is part of the LFS/Skillset/The Bureau's Hothouse development scheme and will be produced by Lisa Williams at Kevin Loader's Free Range Films. The son of Cornish playwright Nick Darke, Henry's own first play *Highfliers* was read at the Royal Court Theatre in London as part of the Young Playwright's Season in 2004, and the 30-year-old has gone from strength to strength ever since.

In addition to *Big Mouth*, Darke is also developing a comedy set in Shoreditch, east London, called *In-Between Love*, set to star Adeel Akhtar, with whom Darke worked on the *Coming Up* strand's drama *Hooked. Where The Bulls Run*, about two brothers visiting Pamplona, rounds out Darke's mini-slate.

**Contact** ✉ henrydarke@yahoo.com »



Yves Salmon: Photographed at The Soho Hotel, London

## Pete Travis & William McGregor

The director of *Vantage Point* and the upcoming *Dredd* talks to young director William McGregor about social work, agents as bouncers and the importance of the right script

**Q William McGregor I'm always interested in what gave film-makers that initial spark, what motivated them to make films. What got you going?**

**Pete Travis** I used to be a social worker. I did community work in King's Cross, London, when it was a pretty rundown part of the world. It was great but it was seriously hard work. And I just wanted a year out. So I picked what I thought would be a piss-easy course, which was communications at Goldsmiths. I assumed it meant you watched films all day; when I got there, I was shocked to find out you had to make something. I was into a lot of left-wing movies, Fassbinder, and I liked the idea of cinema as a political tool. So I did a drama-documentary about the only three things I really knew about: football, the miners' strike that I'd stood on a few demos for, and the Spanish Civil War, which I kind of fantasised about when I was younger. So I wrote this ridiculous story about a football hooligan who meets an old woman who used to be involved in the Spanish Civil War. My tutor loved it and I sent it to the NFTS. But they said I wasn't quite good enough...

**WM I got rejected from there as well a few years ago.**

**PT** I got down to the last 20, I think. They said I needed more experience working with actors, which was actually really good advice for me. So I spent the next five years blowing all my money on fringe theatre. I put on a bunch of plays. It's great fun but it's like pouring money down the toilet. After doing that I got a job as a researcher for a local TV show because I knew I didn't want to go back to being a social worker. But I wasn't getting any closer to making a film. I had saved a bit of money

and I met someone who agreed to help me with the rest. And I found a Nick Hornby story that I loved, called *Faith*. I wrote a begging letter to Nick Hornby and he let me have it for a couple of hundred quid. So I adapted his short story and shot a short and that was the first thing I'd done that was, I suppose, proper.

**WM Did that help to get you noticed?**

**PT** I got an agent from it. Film-making is like this really exclusive nightclub and there are great big bouncers on the door who are agents. And if you don't get one, you don't get in. I had sent it [the short film] to a bunch of agents and I got this phone call one morning. This guy said to me, 'I watched your film at 5 o'clock this morning and loved it.' I thought, 'Oh God, he's a weirdo.' He told me his young son had been up all night teething and he'd finally given up on sleep and watched my short. And that was Alan Radcliffe. His son was Daniel Radcliffe. And he was a very big agent at William Morris in London. And I signed with him. But then it took me ages to get another job.

**WM When did you get your break?**

**PT** I couldn't really get a job, and I got so broke I did the first job that came along that paid the rent, a kids' show that was seen by Christine Langan. She was looking for a director for an episode of the second series of *Cold Feet*. And what's really interesting, the other directors of that series were Tom Hooper and Tom Vaughan. And Christine Langan is now the head of BBC Films. So that was the big break for me. After that I made two TV films with Peter Morgan. Paul Greengrass saw one and offered me *Omagh*, which was the first [feature] film I did. From when I made the short until then it was five years, so it was pretty fast.

**WM How much did you learn in that time?**

**PT** You learn all the time. You learn on everything you do. I learnt that you don't get anything unless you work hard for it, to be honest. If I had a quid for everybody that came up to me and said, 'I've got this great script, I want to go to Cannes and sell it. What do you think I should do?...' I think, 'Why don't you just make something?' If you really feel like you're born to do this, it's something you cannot *not* do. You don't take a script to Cannes and hope somebody will buy it. You fucking make a short film for no money and use your mates and your money and sell your car and your cat and your house.

**WM You said earlier that politics got you into film-making. Was that what drew you to *Dredd*?**

**PT** It's always for me the script; it always starts with that. And I loved Alex Garland's script, it's just extraordinary — really visceral and real and tough. That's why I did it. Somebody much more famous than me once said there are only two decisions you make as a director that are worth anything. The script and who's in it.

Whatever you do with the camera, if you've picked the wrong script or actors it makes no difference. Those two things are most important. I spent a long time actually waiting for *Omagh*. I suppose if there's any advice to give someone when they are starting out it's don't do something if you don't feel you'd give your life for it. Because if you get that one shot and it's something you don't care about that much, then you won't do it very well.

You see the choice that a lot of people make after making really interesting short films, and you think, 'Why did you do that?!' Sometimes it just looked like someone paid them a lot of money. Which is fair enough but I

'You have to go out there knowing that you would rather die than not do this. If you don't feel like that, then you shouldn't do it'

**Pete Travis, director**

think you have to be quite ruthless with yourself because this world is so competitive. Honestly I think that was one of the reasons I was picked to do *Vantage Point*, because I was younger and cheaper than Paul Greengrass. He'd just done *Bourne*. They wanted something handheld and realistic and they'd just seen *Omagh*. So I do think you have to hold out for the one thing you want to do more than anything in the whole world. And I knew when I got *Omagh*, that would be the one for me. That would be the first film I would make properly. And I think it shows.

**WM Hopefully, later in the year, I'll be shooting my first feature, *The Rising*. Do you have any specific advice?**

**PT** It's not original, I can't remember who said it first but my advice is: 'everything cuts together' and 'get more sleep than the actors'. A lot of people fret about what will and what won't cut together and everything does actually cut in my experience. Maybe not well, but it does. I also think you have to be very passionate about what you want to do. You have to go out there knowing that you would rather die than not do this. If you don't feel like that, then you shouldn't do it. Most people in your life come second if you're a director and you're serious about your work. I've just got very understanding people in my family. **E** »

# Simon Curtis & Jamie Stone

My Week With Marilyn director Simon Curtis talks to Student Academy Award-nominated film-maker Jamie Stone about the transition from stage to screen and keeping open as many doors as possible

**Q** **Jamie Stone** I come from an art and animation background and I'm trying to make the transition from shorts to longer narratives. How did you find the transition from theatre to TV and then on to feature films?

**Simon Curtis** Being a director is such a hard thing to define, isn't it? Having done my first film recently, I was struck by the many different skillsets needed at different stages in the process — to develop the script, raise the finance, the skills you need to cast it, choose the crew, the skills you need to shoot it, edit it, navigate the studio system and then the skills you need to promote it. They're all different jobs. In some ways I was very glad to have the experience I've had, particularly in the theatre and TV industries.

The thread that runs through my career is working with actors; theatre is a brilliant training ground for learning how to work with actors — you get used to lengthy relationships with them on a particular piece of work.

The thing that's most striking about a film set is that you're making hundreds of final decisions every day — this is the only time you'll be doing that scene — but in the theatre you have the luxury of a proper rehearsal over three, four, five weeks.

But the big lesson having made *My Week With Marilyn* is the exposure of a film is so huge it's got to be something, whether you're right or wrong, that you believe in passionately.

In theatre and television there's more of a chance of doing two or three theatre shows a year or one or two TV shows a year; you can take a gamble, make it quickly, edit quickly, it goes on quickly and it either sinks or swims and you move on.

Whereas film you're sort of stuck with it for a very long period, so it's got to be something you are passionate about.

'You can become a brilliant director without knowing a single thing about a camera, without having ever met an actor'

**Simon Curtis, director**

**JS** Is there a part of you that would like to be liked to have gone to film school?

**SC** Sometimes I wish I was more technically expert in terms of talking with the crew. But the weird thing about directing is that you can become a brilliant director without knowing a single thing about a camera, without having ever met an actor. There are no rules. The alchemy of one piece of work, that's directing.

When I was in the theatre and wanted to work in film, a very eminent film director let me come on his set and I swear I don't think I heard him say a single thing the whole day! It was very confusing. It can turn out that the gaffer is the loudest person there. So it can be confusing going to someone else's set, you don't quite know what's going on. I was lucky because I've watched lots of other directors' sets and been on lots of sets. I was an assistant director to Danny Boyle and Roger Michell, then when I was at the BBC, I worked alongside people like David Yates, Joe Wright, Tom Hooper, and as a producer I worked with Stephen Daldry and Sam Mendes. So I have a lot of experience of watching other directors at work and seeing how other people define what directing is. And that has been invaluable experience.

**JS** My Week With Marilyn brilliantly captured the battlefield psychology a film set can have. Do you have any tips for keeping a set together?

**SC** I like a lot of running jokes, actually. In a sense, I cast a crew as well as casting the actors. For *Marilyn* I brought a lot of crew from the BBC, people I trusted as well as people I liked. And I got a lot of support from them. Making a film is like going to war — it can't always be fun but it can't always be a nightmare and I try to keep the atmosphere on a set as light as possible. On [*Marilyn*], the level of impersonation of famous people on that set and the

amount of attention that was going to be lavished on those performances concentrated all our minds.

**JS** What advice would you have for a young director when it comes to working with, or trying to work with, top actors?

**SC** Be enthusiastic and respectful and acknowledge their experience. You can learn from them and I think it's a two-way street. So much about directing is relationships and knowing how to get on with people. I've worked with some of the dames, if you like, and some don't want to be bothered and don't want notes and others want a lot of notes.

There was one famous actress I worked with and I asked her agent for advice before I set out to work with her and he said, 'Don't let her smell your fear.' Which is a terrifying thing to be told! I think in a long career they work on so many sets they don't want to be messed around, they like it to be an efficient set, they like it to be a happy set, they like to have time to do their work. Alec Guinness said to me, 'I don't mind what happens, but I don't want to be rushed into doing my scene at ten to seven.' Kenneth Branagh last year, he had very definite ideas of how the day should go and I would ignore that at my peril, especially from someone who is so experienced in every aspect of film-making. Of course you can't please everyone all the time but it's about taking things on board — it's a long, complicated relationship that is always different, always surprising.

**JS** Are there any really common mistakes you see young film-makers make?

**SC** I think the schedule is so important. And I would urge all young film-makers to form a good relationship with a very good first AD. Make sure your first AD isn't new to the business as well! The making of the schedule is also the



Yves Salomon: Photographed at High Road House, Chiswick, London

making or breaking of the film. Make sure it is realistic. Every schedule is going to be too tight, but is it realistic? You need a sense of the day, that you can afford those extra shots in the morning because you know you can do the scene in the afternoon in one shot. Having that takes the pressure off everyone else. So it comes back to that thing of creating an atmosphere where everyone can do their best work — from the actors, DP, sound, make-up. Everyone wants to feel respected and

as if they are doing their best for you and the schedule is an important part of that — it gives you the space to hear people's needs with confidence that you can help. I look back with horror at some of the early schedules I did and some of the terrible mistakes I made.

**JS** If you were coming straight out of film school, what would you be doing now?

**SC** Try to open as many doors as possible, because you don't know which

ones are going to remain open and which are going to be slammed in your face. As a director I look at theatre, I keep an eye out on TV, and film of course. A career is a long thing, hopefully, so be as open to as many possibilities — you will have a question of whether you should do TV work or hold out for film and the project will make that decision for you. If you fall in love with a TV script, there's no reason not to do it. I would encourage you to go with your gut. »

# Rebecca O'Brien & Dominic Buchanan

Ken Loach's longtime producer Rebecca O'Brien talks to budding producer Dominic Buchanan about being sociable, learning on the job and having organisational genes

**Q** **Dominic Buchanan** What tips would you give a young producer?

**Rebecca O'Brien** A producer has to go into the real world, I don't think you can train a producer. You can only really produce when you're producing. I was lucky to learn on the job. I started in production and location managing and line producing. But I'd never raised money. The first film I produced was 100% funded by the BFI. The second thing I produced was *Hidden Agenda* with Ken [Loach] and I didn't have to raise the money for that. As a producer, you seek out people — the bits you can't do, you find someone who can. I found an executive producer who would raise money for us and that just happened to be [Working Title's] Eric Fellner. I also had executive producers on *Land And Freedom*. I can do it now but it takes a long time to get fully qualified.

But generalising about producing is just hot air, really. It's a really supportive network once you're in it, the film network. People are very helpful to each other even though they're rivals. It's about knowing people and the advice you seek is always about specific problems — who would you go to in Jordan to help set up a shoot? You don't go around asking, 'How do I be a good producer?' Though maybe I should try — I'm still waiting for that blockbuster hit. There are always ambitions, even at this stage. I'd love for Ken to have a hit in his own country.

What brought you into producing?

**DB** I was doing acquisitions and I started to realise I wasn't going to end up there. I was asked to produce *Gimme The Loot* [which screened in Un Certain Regard at Cannes this year] because I knew the director-writer, Adam [Leon]. There was no reason for me to

say no! And once I got into it, I realised I wouldn't go back.

**R O'B** I always think I'm not as good as other people are at any one thing, but I'm quite good at joining them together and smoothing things over. I'm very sociable and I love putting people together and making things happen. Because I'm a jack of all trades, film is a perfect thing for me. And because it changes all the time on every film you do, even if you're making films with the same people. You've got a different job every time, almost.

**DB** It's interesting to know you're sociable — I am, and I always end up connecting people in some way. I did fashion week parties in New York and, when you think about it, that's producing too.

**R O'B** My mum and granny were organisers. There's an organisational gene in me. We lived in quite a big house in Scotland and when we moved there my mum wanted to make the best of it, so she threw this huge carnival fete for the Freedom From Hunger campaign in 1963. She wasn't content to have a pipe band. She organised the house to be set on fire and the fire engine to come. She set up a dog-racing track in the garden. And I was brought up with her being a role model. She had a mental illness, sadly, and she wasn't always like that, but when she was well, there'd always be a major event happening. So I got used to having these life-changing experiences and that's why I became a producer — you get a life-changing experience every year.

I worked at a film festival, Edinburgh, I did three summers there back in the '70s. And that's how I got to know a lot of people. Then I saw a small ad — back in 1981 — in *The Observer* newspaper for a one-week film-production course, and that was it, that was me.

'The film network is a supportive network, once you're in it. People are very helpful to each other, even though they're rivals'

**Rebecca O'Brien, producer**

**DB** It can't always have been smooth sailing?

**R O'B** I had lucky breaks. I ended up working on *My Beautiful Laundrette*. Everybody who worked on it was new — and brilliant. But I wasn't expecting to be a producer, you evolve into it. And it's your enthusiasm for getting things to happen which makes you a natural producer. Then I hooked up with Ken and that was another piece of serendipity. I ended up being Working Title's expert on Ireland as I'd done a Maeve Binchy TV series with them there [*Echoes*] and they were planning a film with Ken, which actually didn't happen. So he and I were suddenly stuck without a film to do and he asked me if I'd be interested in trying to get what became *Hidden Agenda* together. It took two or three years to get off the ground. We had three or four false starts, it was terribly controversial. But the fact we'd pulled it off made us feel we could do more things. That's what bonds you, going through the experience of making a difficult film together — and still speaking at the other side of it. We went on to *Land And Freedom*. We've done 12 films since then, not counting the documentary or TV bits and pieces.

**DB** Is there any type of film you'd like to do that you haven't done?

**R O'B** Not really, because I discovered when I made *Mr Bean* in Los Angeles — which wasn't a big film but it was a studio film — that I don't like the

industrial scale of a studio film. I like to know everyone who is working for us. The low to medium budget, the £3m-£5m (\$4.6m-\$7.7m) mark, is where I like to be. I'd love to have made *Star Wars* — honestly! — but I'm very happy where I am. I felt after we made *Land And Freedom*, which was such an all-encompassing film, we really felt we'd been to war and we'd somehow had a parallel experience. We came home exhausted and after that I was so proud of making that film, artistically, that I felt I didn't even need to make another film in my life. In a way if you've achieved something you're really proud of early on it makes things easier — you're not striving ambitiously. You have ambitions but it doesn't get in the way of the project.

**DB** What has been your biggest obstacle?

**R O'B** It's always the disaster you don't anticipate. That's something you can never work out. Persuading people to part with their money. And they're so stupid that they don't love your film the way you do! But I'm an optimist so obstacles are hurdles to get over. Ken had a nasty accident last year and that was very hard. He was taking his plate back to the caterers [on the set of *The Angels' Share*] and he fell and hit his head on the sharp corner of a step. Twelve stitches in his head — I'm not very good at blood. I was sitting on the ambulance steps trying not to pass out myself. That's not Ken the filmmaker, that's Ken my friend. And then the crisis was what the hell do we do; it was day one of the shoot. We didn't know — he's 75 — how he was going to be after this. Was he going to be able to recover? We had to suspend *The Angels' Share* for three weeks. And we weren't ever sure how we were going to go back. Anyway, we got there, but I wouldn't like to go through that again. **E**



Yves Salmou. Photographed at the offices of Sixteen Films, London



Adam Scourfield

# Class of 2011: one year on...

Last year's Stars of Tomorrow are conquering the world. **Fionnuala Halligan** tracks them down

## Actors

**1 Vanessa Kirby** is about to begin work on *The Necessary Death Of Charlie Countryman* opposite Shia LaBeouf, before starting work on Richard Curtis' *About Time*. Once that has wrapped, Kirby will return to the stage, playing Masha in the Young Vic's production of *Three Sisters*.

**Joshua Bowman** has wrapped filming on the first series of *Revenge* for CBS in the US, one of the hottest new shows on US television which is currently being retransmitted on E4 in the UK.

**2** After being nominated for the prestigious Ian Charleson award this year for his work on *A Woman Killed By Kindness*, **Sebastian Armesto** will be back at the National Theatre later this

year leading the cast in a production of Tirso de Molina's *Damned By Despair*, adapted by Frank McGuinness. Armesto will also appear in the five-part TV drama *Parade's End*, adapted by Tom Stoppard from Ford Madox Ford's novels, and directed by Susanna White.

**Georgia King** went straight into shooting *Austenland*, and has just filmed the lead role in Ryan Murphy's (*Glee*) pilot for NBC, *The New Normal*, alongside Ellen Barkin, playing an American (King got the part without Murphy realising she was English).

**John Boyega** played a young Mike Tyson in *Da Brick* and stars opposite Chiwetel Ejiofor, Thandie Newton and Joseph Mawle in Biyi Bandele's adaptation of *Half A Yellow Sun*, shot on location in Nigeria.

**Alexandra Roach** is finishing work on *Anna Karenina* for Joe Wright, playing the role of Countess Nordstrom. She also starred in *Private Peaceful* for Pat O'Connor, and director Iain Softley's *Trap For Cinderella*, all due out this year.

**3 Phoebe Fox** is currently shooting the lead role in *Switch*, a new series from the *Being Human* team, in which she plays a witch. After that, Fox will play Cordelia to Jonathan Pryce's Lear at the Almeida Theatre in London.

**Antonia Campbell-Hughes** is well on her way to being the UK's indie queen. Straight after Stars of Tomorrow 2011, she shot *Storage24*, which hits cinemas this June, and followed it up with the lead in *Kelly + Victor*. Her biggest part, though, was playing Natascha

Kampusch in Constantin Films' English-language *3096 Days*, about the kidnap victim's eight-year ordeal, which has wrapped at Bavaria Film Studios.

**Douglas Booth** went straight from the Stars shoot to playing Romeo in director Carlo Carlei's *Romeo & Juliet*, opposite Hailee Steinfeld. He has also landed the coveted role of Shem in Darren Aronofsky's *Noah*, opposite Russell Crowe.

**4 Joe Cole** played the lead in *Offender*, to be released by Revolver, and has also been filming the second series of *The Hour* for the BBC.

**5 Robert Emms** went from *War Horse* to *Mirror Mirror*, and featured in the Cannes Critics' Week opener *Broken* with Cillian Murphy and Tim Roth.

**6** After touring the awards circuit for his role in *Weekend*, **Tom Cullen** is in Jordan shooting the feature *Last Days On Mars* for director Ruairi Robinson opposite Liev Schreiber and

- 1** Vanessa Kirby and Joshua Bowman
- 2** Sebastian Armesto, Georgia King, John Boyega and Alexandra Roach
- 3** Phoebe Fox, Antonia Campbell-Hughes and Douglas Booth
- 4** Joe Cole
- 5** Robert Emms
- 6** Tom Cullen and MyAnna Buring
- 7** Arjun Rose, John Maclean and Colin Kennedy
- 8** Jay Basu
- 9** Rowan Athale

Romola Garai, with Focus Features on board for world sales.

**MyAnna Buring** went straight from *Kill List* into filming Tom Green's BBC1 three-part series *Black Out* opposite Christopher Eccleston and Andrew Scott. She is currently filming the eight-part series *Ripper Street* for the BBC. She will appear in *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn – Part 2* at the end of the year.

## Directors & writers

**7 Arjun Rose** has signed a TV development deal with Elton John's Rocket Pictures and is set to shoot *The Blindside*, his second feature after *Demons Never Die*, in January 2013 with Alcon Entertainment. He has also signed with Anonymous Content.

**John Maclean's** short *Pitch Black Heist* went on to win the Bafta for short film. He is currently writing a feature, commissioned by Film4.

Having won the Scottish short film Bafta for *I Love Luci*, **Colin Kennedy**

is set to direct comedy *Swung*, to star Elena Anaya, and adapted by Ewan Morrison from his novel of the same name. With backing from Creative Scotland, he hopes to start shooting this autumn.

**8** Screenwriter **Jay Basu's** *Fast Girls* is out this month. He is currently writing the sequel to Gareth Edwards' *Monsters*, to be called *Dark Continent*, for Vertigo. It will be directed by Tom Green (*Misfits*). Basu is also writing a Jack the Ripper film for Pathé, alongside an Ireland-set crime film, which Lenny Abrahamson is set to direct.

**9 Rowan Athale** recently shot his first feature as writer/director, *Wasteland*, with Timothy Spall, Matthew Lewis, Luke Treadaway, Gerard Kearns, Neil Maskell, past Star of Tomorrow Iwan Rheon, and Vanessa Kirby, whom he met on the Stars of Tomorrow 2011 photoshoot. The film is currently in post-production (see p63). **E**