

Rocks

Directed by Sarah Gavron

Story by Theresa Ikoko

Written by Theresa Ikoko and Claire Wilson

Produced by Faye Ward and Ameenah Ayub Allen

Premiere: 3. juni 2021

Længde: 93 minutter

Censur: 7 år

Instruktør: Sarah Gavron

Premierebiografer:

Grand Teatret, Dagmar Teatret, Empire Bio, Valby, Øst for Paradis, Biffen Aalborg, Albertslund, Struer, Farum, Ishøj, Frederikssund . m.fl.

Synopsis:

En skæbnesvanger dag kommer 15-årige Rocks og lillebror Emmanuel hjem fra skole og opdager, at moren har forladt dem. Rocks frygter de vil blive adskilt, og hun gør derfor alt for at holde deres situation hemmelig. Med alle odds imod sig, formår hun, med hjælp fra sine højtelskede veninder, at undgå myndighederne. Men udfordringerne vokser sig større og større, og Rocks mærker afmægtigheden tage til og presset stige. Situationen truer med at få store konsekvenser for hendes forhold til sine veninder såvel som hendes egen og Emmamuels fremtid.



Filmmakers' Statement

"We the *Rocks* team are delighted to finally be bringing our special film to UK and Irish cinemas. As a team, we have always felt passionate about the film's collaborative nature being acknowledged and credited by all who write about it. The film's story was authored by Theresa Ikoko, a young British Nigerian woman who co-wrote the script with Claire Wilson. In a unique process, our two writers, the young cast and many of the creative team collaborated on the making of *Rocks* right from the outset and through to its completion. At a time when it has become unavoidably clearer that creatives of colour have been, and are, so often unacknowledged, this feels even more important now. As you can see from our synopsis for *Rocks*, we speak of the collaboration rather than just referring solely to one director's vision and attribute the way the film was made to that team endeavour. These are elements which we feel must come through in all that is written about the film, to do justice to the unique way it was made and the people who made it. We are grateful for all the support *Rocks* has received - thank you for reading this."

Very best wishes,

Team *Rocks*

Logline

The film follows teenager Rocks (Bakray) who fears that she and her little brother Emmanuel (D'angelou Osei Kissiedu) will be forced apart if anyone finds out they are living alone. With the help of her friends, she evades the authorities and navigates the most defining days of her life. A film about the joy, resilience and spirit of girlhood.

Short Synopsis

Rocks (15) is a teenage girl with big dreams for the future, loyal fun friends and an adoring, though mischievous, little brother Emmanuel (7). Rocks enjoys school (as much as any teenager does) and lives a full vibrant life in East London with her team of London-centric female best friends. Rocks' world is turned upside down when she returns from school to find her mum gone, having left some cash and a note offering little explanation except that she is sorry. Determined to stick with her brother and avoid being taken into care against all odds, Rocks leaves her home and hides in pockets of East London. As each day becomes tougher and her secret harder to hide, Rocks starts to push away those who love her and her friendship group begins to fracture. When the authorities finally catch up with her, there is really only one source of support for her to turn to: her friends. A film about the joy, resilience and spirit of girlhood.



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Long Synopsis

Olushola Joy Omotoso – known as “Rocks” – is a popular 15-year-old with big dreams of starting her own make-up business, brilliant friends and a mischievous, but adoring little brother called Emmanuel (7). She lives on an estate in East London near her best friend Sumaya and others from their friendship squad.

At the end of their first day back at school after the summer holidays, Rocks’ world is turned upside down by the discovery that her mum Funke has disappeared. It’s not the first time Funke has gone missing – Rocks is familiar with the bouts of depression that her loving but fragile mum suffers. But this time Funke has left a note saying ‘sorry’, a thin envelope of cash, and her disappearance feels more permanent. To add to her problems, Rocks’ grandmother has recently returned to Nigeria. She has no adults to turn to, it’s just her and Emmanuel against the world.

Rocks is determined to stick with her brother against all odds. At first, she tries to keep the fact that they are home alone a secret, but she can’t hide the truth from her loyal, caring and intelligent best friend Sumaya who knows Rocks too well to let this get past her. The two girls spend the following days doing their best to be responsible grown-ups and look after Emmanuel, while bouncing between moments of childish fun and innocence with their lively squad including Khadijah, Sabina, Yawa and Agnes.

Rocks grows increasingly anxious about how she and her brother are going to cope. When they arrive home one day to find social services on their doorstep, Rocks feels they have no choice but to go on the run.

Rocks’ first port of call is Sumaya’s home, but the strain she is under forces the friendship to crack and they fall out spectacularly – as only teenagers can. A lifeline seemingly presents itself in the form of Roshé – a magnetic but troubled new girl who is more than happy to bunk off school and introduce Rocks to new ways of making money. The further she is drawn into Roshé’s exciting world, the more isolated she grows from her genuine friends and the more blind she becomes to the betrayal that lies ahead.

When social services finally catch up with Rocks and she is separated from her brother, there is only one solution: her friends. The girls reunite, pool their resources and embark on a courageous journey to track down Emmanuel, where they discover – to Rocks’ relief – that he is settled. Rocks begins to find a way to reclaim her happiness and at the epicentre of that are her female friends.

ROCKS is a Fable Pictures production. Funded by Film4 and the BFI (awarding National Lottery funding), in association with Altitude Film Entertainment/Wellcome, Head Gear Films, Metrol Technology and Kreo Films.

The release of Rocks is supported by the BFI Audience Fund, awarding National Lottery funding.



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Creating ROCKS: “We wanted to work collaboratively with young people in the development process and throughout filming.”

ROCKS came about through a creative collaboration between the cast, other young Londoners, the filmmaking team and the writers. The director Sarah Gavron and producers (Faye Ward, Ameenah Ayub Allen) worked with writers (Theresa Ikoko and Claire Wilson) and other key creatives (casting director Lucy Pardee, associate director Anu Henriques, associate producer Hannah Price), on an extensive research and workshop process with the young people. This was supported by community workers and youth consultants.

Out of this workshop process came the world and the characters of the film, but the central narrative of ROCKS was conceived by Theresa Ikoko. During the time of workshopping with the young cast, Ikoko had been working on an outline of a story very close to her heart about a sibling relationship, which she shared with the team. “I had an outline of something very personal to me, and I felt a strong connection in the workshops particularly to one of the young people, Bukky (who then became our central character Rocks). We are both British Nigerian and I really felt this story could work well for her.”

Director Sarah Gavron adds, “As a team, when Theresa suggested this narrative we all immediately responded to it as a story that felt resonant and powerful and that allowed space for the characters and world we had been developing for some time. So it became a process of the workshops then building on that central story and the young people contributing to that.”

The seeds of the idea to do a film with and about teenage girls in a collaborative way, started some years earlier with conversations between Sarah Gavron and producer Faye Ward (ROCKS marks their third collaboration together). While travelling with SUFFRAGETTE, Gavron and Ward met many different young women, who in response to the film, reflected on their own lives and raised issues around the intense and myriad pressures that teenage girls and young women face in today’s world. Faye Ward comments: “Sarah and I noticed that there weren’t many films for young women about young women. So we started to scratch away at how “older” people could go about making a film that conveys their experience.” Gavron continues, “We decided to set up the film in a way that enabled the young people themselves to be central to the filmmaking process. We had no narrative ideas at that point as we wanted to discover them during the process and build the film with a team and crucially with the young people.”

Film4 and the BFI (awarding National Lottery funding), who had supported SUFFRAGETTE (Film4 and former distributor of National Lottery funding, the UK Film Council, also backed Sarah's debut feature BRICK LANE), came on board while the idea for the film was still in its genesis and were willing to support this unconventional and bespoke development process which was to involve an extensive period of research and workshopping with young Londoners across girls’ comprehensives and youth hubs. Faye Ward says “At this early stage we only had a theme, a spirit, an audience aim and a start



of concept to pitch so it was a leap for Film4 and BFI to back the development. But we had grown such a great relationship with them over the years they embraced this different approach.”

To help them achieve this bespoke research period they brought on casting director and story researcher Lucy Pardee who is known for her work in bringing realistic stories of young women to the screen; FISHTANK and AMERICAN HONEY are two of her previous projects. Pardee says, “Sarah was keen to make a film about these young women set in London, that was reflective of London as it really is. As she wanted to focus on a world with a female centre, we started by approaching inner city girls’ schools. The first task was to find those schools that are ethnically and religiously mixed as London is, that we could research in. Everyone you would find on a standard London street – that’s the kind of mix we wanted.”

Gavron and Pardee sat in on Year 7, 8 and 9 classes over many months, sitting in the back of classrooms and outside in playgrounds during breaks. They decided that Year 9 and 10 was the group that they would focus on. Gavron explains, “There was something captivating about that age group, as within those academic years they change so profoundly – both physically and in their outlook.” Pardee recalls. “During the research period, we’d listen to girls and observe friendships and how they change from one day to the next. We were really drawn to the livelier girls, the ones who were front footed in terms of how they expressed themselves.”

Gavron adds, “Many of the girls were massively spirited and tenacious, and it was clear that friendships were paramount in their lives. Often they were faced with a complicated adult world and while they were able to deal with much of it, they were also sometimes understandably overwhelmed. All-in-all they were a really fascinating mixture of adult and child, both knowing and unknowing about the world they are living in.”

As a next step, the team - the director, the writers, producers and creatives gathered and set up a series of workshops with young people, to further explore some of the issues and ideas that had emerged from the research. From the outset, they advertised that some of those who attended the workshops would have the opportunity to have a role – big or small - in the film. “We initially invited girls who we had met along the way but we also opened it up to others. So alongside these initial workshops an open audition process began to find more girls who might appear in the film itself.” Gavron continues: “Unusually, the story development and casting processes went hand in hand as we wanted to build the film around the girls we found rather than come up with a script and then find our cast.” For the open auditions the responses were immensely positive. Pardee recalls, “1300 girls came to the auditions – most of them had no previous acting experience. It wasn’t just the girls who thought they could do drama, it was also the girls who wanted an opportunity and were venturing out of their comfort zone.” Pardee elaborates, “We didn’t have a brief in terms of the type of girl we had to find which was an interesting way to cast! Female casting is usually very much based on looks, but the liberating thing about ROCKS was that we weren’t tethered in that way. It was actually about saying OK, who is naturally a really good improviser? Who wants to be part of this? That’s what we were looking for.”



Out of this process a group of 30 came to the fore and they were a wide-range of girls from many backgrounds.

Before this point and to aid this process, Ward and Gavron brought on award-winning producer Ameenah Ayub Allen who had worked successfully with them both across BRICK LANE and closely with first time child actors on THE SELFISH GIANT. Allen became part of the team who worked with the girls across the workshops.

Allen says “They were quite often like theatre workshops, but week by week we were also always working on the process and tuning the prospective filmmaking approach. Sarah Gavron always wanted the filmmaking to be a collective collaboration (which was a new way of working for all involved). Both the creative team and the girls were really up for this ‘live process’ and dialogue. It was an open, warm and collaborative space which continued into filming.”

In the midst of this workshop process, when Theresa Ikoko shared her story idea, the team began to feel they had a project that could move towards production. The workshops became more focused and the group of young people even tighter. Gavron comments: “In some ways the girls who would take part in the film were selecting themselves, as those who showed real interest in acting and in working in collaboration were the ones who stayed.” As co-writer Claire Wilson says “Once we had the backbone of a story, we then pitched it back to the girls. It was the most terrifying thing I’ve ever done! We put the story on post it notes around the room, showed it to the girls and asked them for their ideas. They did not hold back!”

Ikoko continues, “The girls are brilliant storytellers – they’d just start talking and we’d pick stuff out and ask if we could include it.” As Gavron says “We all learned so much from each other. The writers were brilliantly agile and able to respond to the girls’ ideas”. Theresa Ikoko and Claire Wilson had never worked together before, but both say they immediately found a shorthand. As Ikoko says “Claire and I were always completely in sync, I felt like I was working with a kindred spirit”. Wilson agrees: “We could finish each other’s sentences – it’s a wonderful thing to find that in a working relationship.”

Throughout this the filmmakers were constantly honing the way to work most effectively to realise the vision for the film. “The team were really keen to have the girls use their own voices and we worked hard to allow them to be authentically themselves”, says producer Ameenah Ayub Allen. “I had a really lively diverse group of teenage female friends growing up, who I am still close to, so this story resonated with me. It was important to seed early this alternative way of filmmaking which would enable authentic cinematic representation of teenage girls who we don’t see enough of on our screens”. Faye Ward adds, “If anything we [the film-makers] were simply there to provide the platform and groundwork for a film that the girls and the writers worked together to build.” As Claire Wilson says, “We wanted the story to be reflective of the girls you see at the bus stop, who are laughing and look amazing – they aren’t celebrated enough. We wanted to ensure there was the space for the girls to create their own dialogue which had depth and sadness but also celebration.”

Sarah Gavron recounts, "During the workshops we tried to stay fluid and respond to what was naturally happening between the girls. Our story has friendship running through it and we noticed a natural bond forming between Bukky and Kosar. So their relationship became the central friendship."

THE CAST OF ROCKS: "I never thought acting was a possibility for me."

At the centre of the cast are the dynamic young women who form the friendship group - they had characters to play which they had helped create, characters who were close to themselves but also distinct and fictionalised. This was a cast that represented the vibrancy of London and the female friendships in an inner city school. As Bukky, who plays the central character Rocks, says: "The friendship group on screen is so diverse and has so many rich personalities, to me it really represents Hackney."

Gavron musing on the cast: "It wasn't just about how they were as actors, it was as much about what they brought to the group dynamic. Tawheda, who is from a British Bangladeshi background, is hilariously funny, but also has this wisdom beyond her years. She has this incredible ability that when everyone is riffing, she will keep it all on track. Ruby, who plays Agnes, was one of the very few members of the cast who had some acting experience, but she grew up in the same area as the other girls and immediately fitted in as a member of the team. Anastasia, who plays Sabina, and identifies as Polish Gypsy, brought a very different energy to the group – quiet and thoughtful. Afi was someone we spotted early on in a youth club choir group called Platform Voices – she has a beautiful singing voice, is a great dancer and as soon as I saw her I was taken by her charisma and energy. She is British Congolese and Ghanaian and just gelled with the group." Shaneigha-Monik Greyson was brought in to the mix to play the character Roshé, the new girl at school who has recently moved to London. Greyson was found via the BAFTA-winning Nottingham Television Workshop. Gavron comments: "Shaneigha was used to doing improvisations in weekly drama sessions, so she understood the process. These girls all had these very distinct personalities and energies, but there was such an alchemy between them."

Gavron continues, "We had met Bukky at the very beginning of the process while researching in schools. She had this vulnerability, but also this strength. She very bravely kept pushing herself during the workshop process. There was nothing she wouldn't try in an improvisation as long as it felt truthful to her. Bukky really had to carry this film, so we were continually checking with her that she was up for the journey. She really grew in confidence through the workshops. The narrative put her in intense and stressful scenarios, and when we started filming she was initially very contained in the way she responded. After one scene I said to her, this is where we need to see the cracks. She said that her character wouldn't show them yet, and I trusted her on that."

Pardee recalls, "Even Bukky's first improvisations in the workshops were incredible – the level of vulnerability she showed was phenomenal. We knew then that we had used the right process in finding



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our girls.” Bukky recounts how she had always wanted to be an actor but didn’t have access to the opportunities that would allow her to pursue that path: “I just knew that it wasn’t a career path that was tangible for me. There was no way I could be an actor, there were no opportunities.”

Kosar Ali, who plays Sumaya, echoes this: “I just didn’t think acting was an option for me. I was encouraged more to be a doctor or an architect or a pilot... something that has respect in the eyes of my culture. But my family was incredibly supportive of me being in the film.” Kosar continues, “Characters in films aren’t generally as diverse as they are in ROCKS. Plus the fact that it’s set in East London – we don’t always see positive stories set in this area.”

Pardee recalls Kosar’s first audition: “Kosar was incredible from the moment I saw her. I had never seen such a combination of strength and vulnerability. Both she and Bukky have this wonderful ability to be tough and at the same time have this incredibly soft centre. They didn’t know each other before we began, but now they have this amazing friendship.”

Gavron explains, “They weren’t at the same school, and they come from very different backgrounds; Kosar is British Somali, while Bukky is British Nigerian. But they found this strong bond. Kosar is a wonderful, instinctive actor – funny and always brutally honest, she was the one who would give me the hardest time whilst filming if a scene wasn’t going to plan, which was always welcomed.”

Kosar laughs, “Yeah, Sarah was like our mum! She was amazing, she always let us speak and gave us the power to contribute, and tell her what to change. She never forced us to say lines – she let us make them up as we went along.”

There was also a key role to be cast in Rocks’ little brother Emmanuel, played by D’angelou Osei Kissiedu. Gavron recalls, “For the sister-brother relationship, which is central to the story, we found this little seven year old, D’angelou who had this incredibly vivid inner life. Lucy and casting assistant Jessica Straker spotted him first and then he came into an audition with me and gave a commentary of what was going on in his head. He came up with lines I never thought a child of his age would have.”

She continues, “D’angelou and Bukky had a very interesting chemistry, they’d fight a lot on and off screen, but they also adored each other on and off screen, just like real siblings. D’angelou agrees: “I had a lot of fun working with Bukky but sometimes I got a bit annoyed because she kept teasing me!”

As it is the girls who remain front and centre in the film, there weren’t a huge number of adult roles, but there are some adult actors involved. Some of the adults were played by Londoners who, like the girls, had not acted before. The teachers were for the most part played by real teachers, but there were a few key professional actors cast for the key adult roles.

Sarah Niles plays a support teacher, Ms Booker, who is important to the girls. The character was based on various pastoral care workers that Gavron observed in the schools visited. Gavron explains,



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“Their role in the schools was to interact one on one with the girls who might be struggling for whatever reason. They provided a lifeline for them, by talking to them and listening to them, so we decided that we needed a figure like this in our film. With all the cuts happening in schools they are often the first to be made redundant despite their value. Theresa and Claire created a character called Ms. Booker and then we found the wonderful Sarah Niles.”

“I had seen her in a play at the Almeida and then when she came in she was so down to earth,” says Gavron. “We put her in a room with the girls and they responded so well to her. Ms. Booker teaches Afrobeats in the film, which was one of the most fun scenes to shoot. It was also really helpful for the girls to have some of these experienced older actors on set, to talk to.”

The team also worked with the remarkable Sharon D. Clarke, who plays Bukky’s foster carer. Gavron says, “As with every moment of this film we shot a ton more than we needed, and then it was pared down in the edit. I wish we could have had more of Sharon in the film as she is so dynamic and watchable, but we had to serve the story. Both [Sarah Niles and Sharon D. Clarke] had a way of being around the girls that made them feel comfortable,” says Gavron. “All of the adult actors involved were aware that they were not centre stage – it was about the girls and they were incredibly generous about that. They were able to offer advice and guidance to these young non-actors, which was very much in the spirit of the process of making ROCKS.

Post shoot the actors have continued to support the girls. Sharon D. Clark invited them to see her in *Caroline Or Change* and had them come backstage, so the relationships and support structure have endured.

Shooting ROCKS: We continued this collaborative way of working right through the shoot

Sarah Gavron recalls: “We had this 12 month ‘warm up’ period of workshops which was essential for preparing us and the cast for the shoot.”

The workshops were what really helped pave the way on set. As Associate Director Anu Henriques, who was part of the team from the start, describes, “These workshops had been partly about getting to know the girls, what they loved, hated, found frustrating, what they were passionate about – every little bit of their massive personalities. It was also about exploring the skills of improvising. We were working to get to a level where we could all feel comfortable on set and have a shorthand with each other for the filming itself, which wouldn’t have come without those months together getting to know each other.”

Tawheda Begum, who plays Khadijah, talks about the workshops: “They really helped us get to know each other and feel more confident in improvising. We would have found it so much harder without them, they really helped prepare us.”



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"We also tried to shoot chronologically as much as possible – which perfectly suited the creative process, but of course made it more complicated for the production," says Gavron. "Instead of finishing in each location - you'd go into one location for a day or two, cause chaos, then go to another location as the story dictated, then come back to that first location and cause chaos again!"

Ameenah Ayub Allen says, "The girls were put through a demanding process, exposed to a big film crew and experienced long days and a moving schedule, but because we had workshoped extensively they were up to the challenge and brought the commitment and importantly trust both in Sarah, the process and the team. They were so used to being filmed in the workshops they were surprisingly comfortable being filmed from day one – although we had thought carefully about our approach including a female camera team and boom operators."

Gavron talks of finding the crew for ROCKS and what the team worked to achieve: "When crewing up we were keen to find people who would be a good match for the unusual way in which we were going to make this film, and who were as close as possible to the world of the girls. We looked for a team that was predominantly young and female."

This resonated with Bukky who says, "Most of the time when I go to see films it's a lot of men and it was really nice to see women everywhere. I want to do some writing and directing, so seeing Sarah, the writers and the camera team being women was really cool. I felt like I could do any of those jobs".

Tawedah Begum agrees saying, "It felt so empowering seeing all these women on set, it really made me feel like I could do anything".

"We decided early on that we wanted to work with female heads of department," Gavron continues. "In particular I had never worked with a female camera department, so we set about finding one. Hélène Louvart has shot over 50 feature films – she's a legend! I had admired her work for a long time. She has worked with Alice Rohrwacher and Agnes Varda – collaborating with some of my female heroes of cinema. I saw Eliza Hickman's BEACH RATS and I loved the intimacy and use of natural lighting. Helene and I started to have Skype conversations and she had this intuitive and emotional take on the script. As a person she is incredibly straight-forward and pragmatic which also suited ROCKS as it was a shoot filled with a cast of young people who had not acted before, so we needed to find a way to navigate every day, and she helped hugely in that."

"We decided that in order to give the girls the most freedom we should use two or sometimes three cameras. In terms of lighting and staging we set up environments where the cast could move pretty much wherever they wanted. We worked with a fantastic second camera operator Rachel Clark, who is a DoP in her own right. Hélène and Rachel operated in a pretty intense way, almost like a dance! We never called action; we just rolled the cameras. We worked in real locations and we tried to make it feel as unlike a 'film shoot' as possible, so it was less intimidating for the young people."



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While the young cast were familiar with the broad strokes of the story, they did not have the script in front of them to work from as Gavron encouraged them to “just take each day at a time and forget what they knew of what lay ahead, to help them stay in the moment”. Gavron would talk to the girls only a night or two before filming about what their character was going to experience in the coming scenes, in order to keep it fresh. Filming in chronological order was key to this.

Ameenah Ayub Allen comments: “it was understandably challenging to manage a very different way of filmmaking with the restraints of a low budget and the demands of filming in London. The fluidity of shooting in story order in multiple locations, servicing the needs of a majority child cast and a unit including two cameras meant that logistics were tough. Whilst working with the young cast over a lengthy period, it was vital to carefully support them, as well as their families and carers. This really helped the first time actors work to give the naturalistic performances they delivered and is why, for instance, we predominantly shot over the school summer holidays.

One of the challenges of working with a first time young cast for the make-up and costume departments was continuity. Costume Designer Ruka Johnson elaborates, “Obviously these girls were completely green! They had no concept of continuity or costume changes so we’re trying to explain a lot. It was a tricky balance but also so exciting.” Make-up Designer, Nora Robertson, agreed. “It was hard sometimes to make them understand that they couldn’t do their hair a different way in-between takes or go off and paint their nails different colours!” However, Johnson recalls how delightful her time with the girls was. “They were so excited by it and that was wonderful to be around. They had a lot of trust in me designing their character looks with them and I tried to make sure I gave them that respect back.”

Associate Director Anu Henriques explains more about the filming process: “One of my roles was to transcribe every take as it was happening, and then to discuss with Sarah and the rest of the team what was and wasn’t working. The shoot definitely wasn’t easy! There were so many moving parts and no day was ever like you expected it to be. We would start the day with an idea of how we thought the scene might go. Then we’d do a first, usually incredibly long take...”

Gavron picks up the baton here. “We’d sometimes run a 45 minute take for a scene that would ultimately last two minutes, as we wanted the cast to be free to try things out and to experiment. I did a lot of talking through the takes to keep the momentum. It fell apart at moments – they are teenagers! Sometimes they were tired, but what I was constantly astounded by was their truthfulness and their bravery. It takes a lot to show who you are on camera, they deserve so much credit for that.”

She continues, “The young cast had no dialogue to learn. The writers had deliberately kept each scene loose in terms of action and dialogue so the precise shape of the scene emerged as we shot. After a first go at a scene we’d have a conversation about it. I had a wonderful team in Anu Henriques, Associate Director, and Hannah Price, Associate Producer, the producers Faye and Ameenah, and of course the two writers Theresa and Claire. We’d often all talk about the scene after each take. We would also talk to the girls to ask if it felt truthful to them. The girls were always brutally honest. I



remember one day Kosar said to me “this scene is dead Sarah, let’s do it differently.” She was right, and so we did!”

Gavron goes into further detail, “We’d sometimes reinvent the shape of a scene on the spot. We did various things to try help this process – we had three cameras that would enable us cut the film together, as the lines and blocking were often so different in each take.”

Associate Producer Hannah Price added: “Because the girls were improvising the dialogue, we would often discover new ideas or character details in the scene that would have a knock-on effect. So part of my job was to figure out on the spot whether the performance matched the overall ideas and whether we needed as a team to quickly recalibrate the next beat.”

Theresa Ikoko says of collaborating with Gavron, “Working with Sarah on set was a real highlight of the process, she would always ask me my opinion of the take and then collaborate with the rest of the team. It felt really special to be part of.”

Afi, who plays Yawa, recalls how much she felt that her voice, and the voices of the other girls mattered. “Sarah, Claire and Theresa, they really listened to us, when they said they were going to do something, they did, and that was amazing.”

Kosar talks about the importance of the story: “People I know have social workers in their lives and parents leaving, and this story is saying to them you’re not alone and not everyone’s life is as it seems.”

The hierarchy that is so often witnessed on film sets was somewhat turned on its head in ROCKS. Gavron herself says, “During this process I wanted everybody around to input as much as I did. It was as much about me listening to them, as them listening to me. I tried to disrupt the hierarchy as much as possible. Everyone had something valuable to say, so I saw my job as finding a way to incorporate their ideas in order to get at the most truthful version, and to facilitate rather than lead or author it. I wanted to be challenged and the team did that. I learnt more from them than they did from me”.

ROCKS was mostly shot in and around the vibrant borough of Hackney with the full co-operation of the council. The team decided early on to make use of existing locations rather than set builds. Production designer Alice Normington (who had worked with Gavron on SUFFRAGETTE) had many conversations with the young cast about the world of the film. When designing the home of the character Sumaya, it was Kosar who helped Alice and her team in terms of what the furniture should be and other details of the British Somalian home. The De Beauvoir estate became the home for



Rocks and Sumaya and a number of local residents assisted with the film. A local woman cooked the yams for the breakfast scene and others appeared as supporting artists.

Post Production and Music

The editing process of the film required editor Maya Maffioli to work through hours and hours of footage and her approach to the material had to be “a blend between fiction and documentary techniques”. Working with Sarah Gavron, Maffioli wanted to find the performances and dialogue that really resonated as truthful and fitted precisely with the storytelling. This meant that a few great scenes ended up on ‘the cutting room floor’.

From the start, music was woven into the edit as music was incredibly important to the cast of ROCKS. As Gavron says: “We knew early on that it would be an essential part of telling this story which we had to get right. We had hours of conversations with the girls during the development process, through the shoot and in post about what and who they were listening to, what they loved, and what was suddenly way out of date.”

Music supervisor Connie Farr, along with her assistant music supervisor Dom Farley, spent time with the girls to get a feel for their individual taste and style, to make the soundtrack feel as authentic and as close to their playlists as possible. They pre-cleared hundreds of potential tracks before shooting began. Anu Henriques continues: “Of course, the girls collections are eclectic, so our final soundtrack includes a range of phenomenal UK artists like Little Simz, Raye, Lethal Bizzle, Kokoroko, Skepta, Flohio and Dave, as well as international talent such as Koffee, Banku Dade, Jowhar Luula, Fiium Shaarrk and Wizkid. It has everything from grime, afrobeats and soul to bashment, Somali love songs, dancehall, rap and jazz.” Ameenah Ayub Allen continues “The team were particularly proud to feature an original end credits track by Ray BLK, a London based British-Nigerian artist. Her original song *Warrior* was written in response to viewing an early cut of the film and brings so much of the spirit of the film to the audience.”

“We’re sisters now, we don’t have a choice”

“Girls these days need to stick together”, Afi says. We need to be together if we want things like the gender pay gap to close, we need to work together.”

Kosar agrees: “Girls don’t always stand together, but they should. This film shows how when girls stand together they can do anything.”

Bukky adds: “People think that all girls do is talk about make-up and boys but that’s not it! ROCKS is a real representation of girls. Girls are so often depicted in a bitchy rude way, their demeanour is shown as so gossipy, but that’s just not how it is.”



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When talking of her fellow cast, Bukky says, “Kosar is amazing. In the scenes we have together she made me want to be better. As we are all first time actors it helped that we were all in it together, we all helped each other.”

“We are like a little family now,” Kosar says. “Each one of us bringing something. We talk every day and meet up as much as we can.”

Tawheda says, “Teenage friendships are never simple, there’s always some beef and some squabbling. ROCKS is really great at showing real life, films often show this picture perfect life and that’s not real.”

Bukky agrees: “This film isn’t fake. It’s not a fairy tale, it doesn’t start and then end and the problem is solved – that’s not how life is. ROCKS shows that, yeah there are going to be bumpy roads but in the end it’s not a sad story, it can still be life.”

Ruby Stokes, who plays Agnes, agrees: “I don’t see a lot of films that represent girls like this. It will resonate with girls and make them feel like they have a place.”

Afi has aspirations to be an actor, a midwife and a motivational speaker. She says of shooting ROCKS, “Working with Sarah and the team was amazing. Everyone was so humble and down to earth. Sarah was like our onset mum!” Talking about the bond that has formed between the girls Afi says with a shrug: “We’re sisters now, we don’t have a choice!”

“Girls like ours in ROCKS don’t see themselves on screen enough, they don’t get a voice,” writer Claire Wilson adds. “ROCKS is a celebratory story. Meeting these girls gave me hope, made me grow as a writer. ROCKS is my proudest piece of work to date.”

Theresa Ikoko says, “I hope these girls give the gift of joy and love to the many young women who will soon see them, and through them, themselves, on screen. The girls are good people who sometimes make mistakes and get it wrong but they are fundamentally kind and their kindness and generosity to each other really shone out. I see ROCKS as a love letter to my big sister and young black women who often have to be stronger and more resilient than their years should require.”

Gavron ends with: “My hope is that young people who go to see the film connect with it, and that they recognise something of themselves on screen. It was so exciting to let the young people take centre stage. Endless thanks, respect and appreciation goes to the girls and to all the team who worked on this film.”

CAST

As the girls are predominantly first time actors we asked them to write a few lines about themselves.

BUKKY BAKRAY

"My name is Bukky and I am from East London, Hackney to be exact, where ROCKS is set. The auditioning process for this film was long, it felt like decades, but also really exciting because this was my first ever role. At first it was quite daunting because I had very little experience in acting but the support from Sarah Gavron, the writers and the team was amazing. I am so glad to be a part of a film like this, everything about it is elite, from the music to the people, everything!"

KOSAR ALI

"I've never thought or imagined I'd be in a film because I didn't think I'd ever even bring myself to audition for one. It's been amazing but surprising. Never thought acting would be something I'd get into and end up believing it's my craft. Especially being from East London and having little opportunities, and rarely finding such a massive blessing, but it truly has become something close to my heart as I also do Performing Arts for GCSE and I love things like magazines."

D'ANGELOU OSEI KISSIEDU

[Written by his mum, Lynette Browne] "D'angelou had never done any acting before but had always expressed his love for performing and role playing. From a young age and to this day, he loves to dress up and role play as different characters from superhero movies, keeping us entertained with song, dance and acting as different characters. When he isn't at school or role playing, he enjoys attending Wing Chun classes which helps to keep him grounded as you would usually always find him in a field of his own imagination and ideas with his younger brother."

SHANEIGHA-MONIK GREYSON

Shaneigha-Monik is making her feature film debut in ROCKS. She currently trains at the BAFTA award-winning Television Workshop in her hometown, performing in a number of showcase events and writing and directing her own scene for a play about bullying. She has enjoyed taking supporting artist roles in CBBC's JAMIE JOHNSON and independent film THE DEVIL OUTSIDE. She says "I was born and raised in Nottingham, but I've travelled all over for my acting career! I hope my face reaches rooms I've never set foot in yet. I've been going to The Television Workshop, since I was 12 and it has been one of the best experiences I have ever been through!"

RUBY STOKES

"My name is Ruby Stokes, I'm 18 and live in Hackney. I'm currently a member of the London Youth Circus at the National Centre for Circus Arts and am trained in aerial skills. I also take dance classes in



ballet and contemporary. My first film was UNA, playing the young Rooney Mara. I then went on to do the BAFTA nominated short film NOSEBLEED, and played Kitty in Ari Folmans animated feature WHERE IS ANNE FRANK. ROCKS has been a new and exciting opportunity to be a part of."

TAWHEDA BEGUM

"I've never auditioned for a film before. This is a new experience which has opened up many doors for a girl who has grown up in Newham, East London. I am involved in performing arts in my school, I really enjoy photography because I'm able to capture the raw nature of a teenagers life."

AFI OKAIDJA

"My Name is Afi Princess Okaidja and I was born and raised In London. I am 75% Congolese and 25% Ghanaian. This was my first experience of acting and what an experience it was! I will never forget the memories I created, I met friends that are now family to me. I am involved in performing arts. I practice my talents at my youth club, they helped me to grow and receive this opportunity. I love writing and listening to music, I also write poetry in my spare time and create dance videos, which I post on Instagram. Prior to getting involved in this project I had a YouTube channel when I was younger, which was kind of funny. Overall my experience was amazing, and I can't wait to keep working on the things I love; acting being one of them."

ANASTASIA DYMITROW

"My name is Anastasia Dymitrow and I was born in 2003 in East London, England. As a child, I had to endure a skin condition called Ichthyosis which made me feel different from other girls my age. At first, it was difficult to come to terms with, but over the years, I've come to learn more about myself and it's given me so many opportunities to speak out about it and possibly help other kids my age cope. Now I'm 15 years old and I'm in a movie which, as I come from a traditional Gypsy/Romani background, is extremely unprecedented. I've met so many wonderful people throughout filming that I now consider family. Back home, I have two older brothers and 2 nieces and 2 nephews who I love spending time with. I'm more of an extrovert, I like going out and socialising, doing things with friends instead of staying home."

SARAH NILES

Sarah Niles is a film, television and theatre actress, who has appeared in stage productions at the National, the Royal Court, The Old Vic and the RSC, The Public Theater in New York and Bush Theatre. Theatre includes: *RICHARD II* (Shakespeare's Globe), *B*, *THE SEWING GROUP*, *FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS* (Parts 1, 2 & 3), *TRUTH & RECONCILIATION* (Royal Court); *Boy* (Almeida); *THE CRUCIBLE* (Old Vic); *ANTHONY & CLEOPATRA* (RSC/Off Broadway); *TABLE, MRS AFFLECK* (National Theatre); *A QUESTION OF FREEDOM* (Feelgood); *THE LONG ROAD* (Curve, Leicester);



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THE QUIET LITTLE ENGLISHMAN (Zho Visual); *PLAY SIZE* (ATC/Young Vic); *LEAVE TAKING, THE INTERROGATION OF SANDRA BLAND, BONES* (The Bush Theatre); *THE BOGUS WOMAN, THE LION THE WITCH & THE WARDROBE, TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* (Haymarket, Leicester); *ENTARETE MUSIK* (Amazonia Theatre Company); *LOWDOWN HIGH NOTES* (Red Ladder); *BLACK LOVE* (Black Arts Development Project); *CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE* (Manchester Library). Television includes: *ALABAMA* (Apple TV/BBC), *DRACULA* (BBC/Netflix), *TRUST ME* (BBC), *MOVING ON* (BBC), *MARLEY'S GHOSTS* (UKTV), *LUCKY MAN* (Sky), *DON'T TAKE MY BABY* (BBC), *CATASTROPHE* (Channel 4), *SPOTLESS* (Netflix), *DEATH IN PARADISE* (BBC), *WATERLOO ROAD* (BBC), *BEING HUMAN* (BBC), *THORNE: SLEEPYHEAD* (Sky), *BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE* (BBC), *MISTER ELEVEN* (ITV), *DOCTOR WHO* (BBC), *A TOUCH OF FROST* (ITV) and *I MAY DESTROY YOU* (BBC). Film includes: *STILL, AUSTENLAND, CUBAN FURY, NOW IS GOOD, LONDON BOULEVARD, GAMES MEN PLAY, HAPPY-GO-LUCKY*.

SHARON D. CLARKE

Sharon D Clarke MBE is an award-winning actor and has enjoyed an illustrious career on both the stage and the screen. Earlier this year she won the Olivier award for Best Actress in a Musical for *CAROLINE, OR CHANGE* which performed at three venues: Chichester Festival Theatre, Hampstead Theatre and its West End transfer at the Playhouse Theatre. She recently starred in *THE LIFE* at Southwark Playhouse and as the title role in *MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM* at the National Theatre. This year she starred in Marianne Elliott's *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*, playing Linda Loman opposite Wendell Pearce at the Young Vic Theatre and currently she is performing in *BLUES IN THE NIGHT* at the Kiln Theatre. Sharon is by no means a stranger to the screen and also has an extensive film and television career. She could recently be seen in the Elton John biopic feature, *ROCKETMAN* opposite Taron Egerton and the most recent series of *DOCTOR WHO* opposite Jodie Whittaker. Her most recent television appearances include *KIRI* opposite Sarah Lancashire, *INFORMER* opposite Paddy Considine and *UNFORGOTTEN*. She also recently reprised her role as series regular Lola Griffin in BBC's *Holby City*. Throughout her career she has won numerous theatre awards including a What'sOnStage award and an Olivier Award nomination for the West End production of *WE WILL ROCK YOU*; an Olivier Award nomination and a Manchester Theatre Award for *GHOST THE MUSICAL* and she won her first Olivier Award in 2014 for Best Supporting Actress for Odessa in *THE AMEN CORNER* at the National Theatre. In 2017 she was awarded an MBE in The Queen's New Year's Honours List for Services to Drama.

CREATIVE TEAM

SARAH GAVRON – Director

Sarah Gavron's cinema debut was *BRICK LANE*, which earned her a BAFTA nomination and The Alfred Dunhill Talent Award at the London Film Festival. Prior to this Sarah's first full length drama, the Dennis Potter Award-winning *THIS LITTLE LIFE* for BBC TV, won her the TV BAFTA for Best New Director, both Royal Television Society and Women in Film and TV Awards for Best Newcomer, and a



nomination for the Douglas Hickox award for Best Debut Director at the British Independent Film Awards. Sarah was then selected as one of Variety's ten directors to watch at the Sundance International Film Festival. During and after her training at the NFTS, Sarah made many short films that have screened internationally and won major awards. Her feature documentary THE VILLAGE AT THE END OF THE WORLD (2013) was nominated for The Grierson Award and won the prestigious Margaret Mead Award. Sarah's feature film SUFFRAGETTE (2015) for Ruby Films, Pathe, Film4 and the BFI, starred Carey Mulligan, Helena Bonham Carter, Meryl Streep, Anne-Marie Duff, Brendan Gleeson and Ben Whishaw, won two British Independent Film Awards and was nominated for four. Recently she directed some of Season 4 of TRANSPARENT for Amazon Studios.

THERESA IKOKO – Writer

Theresa Ikoko studied psychology at undergrad and a masters in Criminology and Criminal Justice. She has had a variety of roles in prisons, secure settings and social inclusion/community engagement projects. She now works in gangs and serious youth violence. Theresa's first full length play, *Girls*, toured in 2016 and 2017, co-produced by Soho theatre, Hightide and Talawa Theatre Company. *Girls* won the Alfred Fagon Award 2015 and was joint winner of the George Devine award 2016. It was shortlisted, with judge's commendation, at the Verity Bargate Award 2015. Theresa is now developing a number of films, TV and theatre projects.

CLAIRE WILSON – Writer

Claire Wilson is a versatile and prolific film and TV writer. Recent film assignments include, WHERE THERE'S DARKNESS (Lee Magiday / BFI), and Mexican set thriller SONORAN DREAM for BBC Films and House Productions. In the TV arena, Claire adapted Le Carrè's THE LITTLE DRUMMER GIRL with Mike Lesslie - Park Chan Wook directed, Florence Pugh, Michael Shannon and Alexander Skarsgard star - which was released in UK (BBC1) & US (AMC) end of November 2018. She is currently writing multiple episodes and is a co-EP on Gareth Evan's GANGS OF LONDON for Jane Featherstone / Pulse / Sky Atlantic / HBO; is creator and show-runner of European thriller THE HUNT for Nicola Shindler / Canal Plus; and is creating and show running psychological mystery thriller THE GALAPAGOS AFFAIR for Filmnation TV. She is also currently writing multiple episodes and co-EPing on THE POWER alongside Naomi Alderman for Jane Featherstone's Sister Pictures and Amazon - which Reed Morano will direct.

FAYE WARD – Producer

Faye Ward is one of the UK's most prominent producers. Faye founded TV & film production outfit Fable Pictures alongside creative partner Hannah Farrell with backing from Sony Pictures Television in 2016, after the success of SUFFRAGETTE written by Abi Morgan and directed by Sarah Gavron, starring Carey Mulligan, Helena Bonham Carter and Meryl Streep. Before founding Fable, Faye was also part of the producing team on series one of the multi-award winning Netflix series THE CROWN.



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2019 is a big year for Fable Pictures. Their first film STAN & OLLIE premiered in the prestigious closing night slot of the 2018 London Film Festival, it was released in cinemas in Jan 2019 and received 3 BAFTA nominations and a Golden Globe nomination. Written by Jeff Pope (*Philomena*, *Little Boy Blue*) and directed by Jon S. Baird (*Filth*), the film stars Steve Coogan and John C. Reilly as beloved comedy duo Laurel and Hardy, and was made with the support of BBC Films and eOne. WILD ROSE their second feature opened worldwide spring 2019. The film stars Jessie Buckley, Julie Walters and Sophie Okonedo, was written by Nicole Taylor (*Three Girls*) and directed by Tom Harper (*War & Peace*, *Peaky Blinders*) for eOne, BFI, Creative Scotland and Film4. Wild Rose premiered at Toronto International Film Festival in 2018 to critical acclaim.

Previously, Ward worked at Ruby Film & Television alongside Alison Owen. Under the Ruby banner she produced the BBC's Golden Globe nominated series DANCING ON THE EDGE, written and directed by Stephen Poliakoff, and an adaptation of Nigel Slater's memoir TOAST adapted by Lee Hall and directed by S.J. Clarkson. For Channel 4 she has produced DOUBLE LESSON starring Phil Davies and written and directed by George Kay.

Other credits include: Co-producer on JANE EYRE directed by Cary Fukunaga starring Michael Fassbender and Mia Wasikowska and Associate Producer on Sarah Gavron's award winning BRICK LANE based on the best selling novel by Monica Ali adapted by award-winning Abi Morgan, Stephen Frears' TAMARA DREWE, FIVE MINUTES OF HEAVEN directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel and the multi award winning television adaptation of SMALL ISLAND for the BBC, directed by John Alexander and starring David Oyelowo.

AMEENAH AYUB ALLEN – Producer

Ameenah is an award-winning independent film producer and Screen Star of Tomorrow. She is currently co-producing Clio Barnard's latest feature for Moonspun Films, BBC Films and BFI. Andrea Luka Zimmerman's inimitable feature doc ERASE AND FORGET premiered at Berlinale, 2017 (Panorama) and was nominated for Best Documentary ahead of UK premiere (BFI London Film Festival) and release. She is development producer for Artangel's new feature HERE FOR LIFE (premiered at Locarno, 2019 - Special Mention Golden Leopard - Filmmakers of the Present) also directed by Zimmerman. Previous to this, she was heavily involved in realising Clio Barnard's THE SELFISH GIANT (Cannes winner and BAFTA nominee - Outstanding British Film) for Moonspun Films, BFI and Film4, as well as Sarah Gavron's award-winning BRICK LANE based on the best selling novel by Monica Ali for Ruby Films, Film4, UKFC and Sony Pictures Classics.

She won Best Short Film at the National Film Awards for ABOVE (BFI/Film London) and executive produced the feature doc GENERATION REVOLUTION. Ameenah was short-listed for an Academy Award and nominated for a British Independent Film Award for the live action short THE ROAD HOME and produced Turner-nominee Zarina Bhimji's installation film YELLOW PATCH.

Associate/Line Producer/Post Production Supervisor and Production Manager credits include the features: ELECTRICITY starring Agyness Deyn for Stone City Films, BFI, Wellcome Trust and Soda Pictures; Clio Barnard's critically acclaimed debut THE ARBOR for Artangel, More4 and Arts Council



England; Turner Prize winner Gillian Wearing's SELF MADE and Clio Barnard's Toronto commended and BIFA nominated DARK RIVER for Film4, BFI, Screen Yorkshire and Wellcome Trust - starring Ruth Wilson and Mark Stanley.

ANU HENRIQUES – ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Anu Henriques joined Fable Pictures (Wild Rose, Stan & Ollie, Rocks) in January 2017 and works across their slate in development and production. For the last three years she has worked closely with Sarah Gavron as Associate Director on ROCKS. This collaboration involved Anu being part of all stages of process, playing a key creative role through development, shoot and post production on the film. Sarah Gavron describes Anu's role as key to her direction of ROCKS.

HÉLÈNE LOUVART – DOP

Hélène Louvart is a prolific French cinematographer with over a hundred feature film credits globally. In 2009 Hélène worked with the prestigious French director Agnès Varda on THE BEACHES OF AGNÈS which won the César Award for Best Documentary Film. As Director of Photography on the 3D documentary feature PINA, Hélène worked with renowned German auteur Wim Wenders. The film became a critical and commercial success upon release leading to an Oscar nomination for Best Documentary Feature and a BAFTA for Film Not in the English Language. Her extraordinary artistic and technical work on PINA was recognized by her peers at Camerimage in 2013, which won her the best 3D documentary award. For her extensive body of work and artistic excellence Hélène Louvart also received the 2012 WIFTS Foundation Cinematographer Award.

At the 2014 Cannes Film Festival, Hélène was present with two films: Alice Rohrwacher's THE WONDERS (which was selected for the Palme d'Or, and awarded the Grand Jury Prize), and the Greek film XENIA by Panos H Koutras (nominated for Un Certain Regard and the Queer Palm award). In 2017 Hélène worked on HAPPY AS LAZZARO with long-time collaborator Alice Rohrwacher, as well as PETRA directed by Jaime Rosales - both selected for 2018 Cannes Film Festival. Mia Hansen-Love's MAYA, set in India was also shot that year. Hélène was also nominated for Best Cinematography at the Independent Spirit Awards for Eliza Hittman's BEACH RATS, which won Best Director at the Sundance Film Festival. Hélène has recently lensed Eliza Hittman's third feature NEVER, RARELY, SOMETIMES, ALWAYS produced by Pastel and BBC Films. Prior to that, she shot two films in Brazil: THE INVISIBLE LIFE OF EURIDICE GUSMAO by Karim Ainouz (which won Un Certain Regard at Cannes Film Festival 2019) and TODOS OS MORTOS directed by Marco Dutra and Caetano Gotardo.

Hélène has just wrapped on THE STORY OF A NEW NAME with Alice Rohrwacher for Wildside, which is part of the TV series MY BRILLIANT FRIEND. She is currently in Croatia shooting MURINA directed by Antoneta Alamat Kusijanovic for RT Features.

MAYA MAFFIOLI – Editor

Born in London but raised in Italy, Maya moved to the UK in the early 2000s, when she started working in film and TV as a runner and assistant editor.

In 2006 she enrolled into the National Film and Television School where she did an MA in film editing. At film school she met Michael Pearce, for whom she cut the BAFTA-nominated shorts RITE and KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES. She collaborated with Michael again on his debut feature, BEAST, which won the BAFTA for Outstanding Debut in 2019.

Maya has worked on several short and feature length projects, both fiction and documentary. Her credits include the Netflix-backed documentary KINGDOM OF US, which won top prizes at both LFF and the Grierson Awards, and the film art project DAU, which premiered at the Theatre se la Ville and Pompidou Centre in early 2019 - a project that Screen International recently labelled "one of the strangest and most ambitious endeavours undertaken in recent European film history." Maya's most recent work can be seen in Annabel Jankel's TELL IT TO THE BEES, starring Anna Paquin and Holliday Grainger, released in cinemas in the US in Spring 2019. She is currently cutting Episode 1 of HBO's new drama series INDUSTRY for Lena Dunham.

ALICE NORMINGTON – Production Designer

Alice Normington is an award-winning Production Designer, known for her work on Roger Michell's MY COUSIN RACHEL, Sarah Gavron's SUFFRAGETTE, for which she won the European Film Award for Production Design, Lone Scherfig's THEIR FINEST and THE RIOTCLUB, Sam Taylor-Wood's NOWHERE BOY, Julian Jarrold's BRIDESHEAD REVISITED, Anand Tucker's AND WHEN DID YOU LAST SEE YOUR FATHER and HILARY AND JACKIE.

Previous films include John Madden's PROOF, Alek Keshishian's LOVE AND OTHER DISASTERS. Marc Munden's MIRANDA, Sara Sugarman's VERY ANNIE MARY. Her television drama credits include THE WOMAN IN WHITE for which she won a BAFTA, WHITE TEETH for which she was BAFTA nominated, GREAT EXPECTATIONS for which she won the RTS Award for Best Production Design and was BAFTA nominated for, THE SECRET WORLD OF MICHAEL FRY.

LUCY PARDEE – Casting Director

Lucy specialises in street casting and long-term script research and has worked with some of the most critically acclaimed filmmakers in the country, including Andrea Arnold, Jonathan Glazer and Lynne Ramsey, as well as a number of exciting first-time filmmakers.

In her casting, Lucy is perhaps best "renowned for her ability to find non-professional performers from beyond the established film industry and the agencies and drama schools that conveyor-belt the pedigree talent" (*The Guardian*). She was the "casting agent" in the story of the discovery of



Katie Jarvis, the award-winning lead in Andrea Arnold's FISH TANK. Lucy's script research has led her to work with some brilliant filmmakers and producers, including Penny Woolcock, Edgar Wright and Joe Cornish, for whom she led the research and street casting for ATTACK THE BLOCK. She went on to collaborate with Andrea Arnold on the casting of WUTHERING HEIGHTS and AMERICAN HONEY, which won the Jury Prize at Cannes and was nominated for the BAFTA for Best British Film.

More recently, Lucy has been working closely with Jonathan Glazer on the development and research of his next feature. She also found Vicky Knight, the critically acclaimed lead in DIRTY GOD, directed by Sacha Polak, which played Venice Berlinale and has been released in June 2019 in the UK to rave reviews. Also, for release is Eva Riley's PERFECT 10, headed by yet another cast of exciting first-timers. Lucy is currently working with Lynne Ramsey on a number of projects, as well as developing her own writing work. She likes to bake bread and play swing ball.

EMILIE LEVIENAISE-FARROUCH – Composer

Emilie Levienaise-Farrouch is an award-winning French pianist/composer living in London. In 2006 Emilie moved from Bordeaux to carry out a BA in Music at Westminster University, then a Master's degree in composition at Goldsmiths with a primary focus on contemporary classical music. Spanning film score, bespoke composition and sound design, her work is connected both by its evocative and meticulous craft. Emilie scored her first feature-length film in 2012: (American-Iranian director Caveh Zahedi's THE SHEIK AND I) a film subsequently banned for blasphemy, its director threatened with arrest and a fatwa. More recently, she composed the music for Harry Wootliff's debut feature ONLY YOU, starring Josh O'Connor and Laia Costa, which premiered at the BFI's London Film Festival. Her CV also includes commissions for the V&A Museum (London), HBO short film LOVE NY, and for drama / documentaries on BBC Radio 4, The Guardian, Funny or Die. In 2013 she received the Emerging Excellence Award from the Musician Benevolent Fund, and in 2015 was commissioned to create a sound-walk for London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. She has also worked on multiple projects in collaboration with visual artists Danica Dakic, Alice May Williams and Natasha Caruana. She has created music for video installations exhibited at Jerwood Project Space, Speke Hall, The ODI, Arles Photo Festival; and also, for VR installations for HOUSE Biennial. As a live performer she has played Tallinn Music Week, Brighton Festival and the Union Chapel. In 2017, she was commissioned by The London Contemporary Orchestra to write a piece for small string ensemble and live electronics, which received a premiere during the 2017 BBC Proms at The Tanks at Tate Modern.

Emilie's debut album, 'Like Water Through the Sand' was released on FatCat Records/130701 in November 2015, with her second album 'Epoques' following in Summer 2018.

NORA ROBERTSON – Make-up and Hair Designer

Nora is an established Make-up and Hair Artist who has worked on major television productions such as the critically acclaimed DOWNTON ABBEY for Carnival Films; MR SELFRIDGE for ITV Studios; THE CROWN for Leftbank Pictures and Netflix and most recently FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL for MGM. Her film credits include James Marsh's award winning film THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING; James Kent's TESTAMENT OF YOUTH - in which Nora was Alicia Vikander's personal artist; NOW YOU SEE ME 2 by Jon M. Chu; THEIR FINEST directed by Lone Scherfig; David Kerr's JOHNNY ENGLISH STRIKES AGAIN for Working Title; Marvel's DOCTOR STRANGE directed by Scott Derrickson and Garth Davis' MARY MAGDALENE for See-Saw Films.

As Make-up and Hair Designer Nora designed the comedy series COMING OF AGE for BBC and the popular CHEWING GUM created by Michaela Coel and SORRY I DIDN'T KNOW directed by Menhaj Huda for TriForce Productions and ITV.

RUKA JOHNSON – Costume Designer

Ruka Johnson began her career working on short films with credits including BIFA winning JACKED for director Rene Pannevis; Berlinale winning BALCONY for Toby Fell-Holden and multi-award winning WE LOVE MOSES for long-time collaborator Dionne Edwards. In music videos Ruka has worked with international artists including Lily Allen for director Myles Whittingham and BLOOD ORANGE for director Crack Stevens. Ruka's television credits include 4 STORIES for directors Anwar Boulifa, Stella Corradi and Dionne Edwards for Channel 4. Ruka's eclectic features include award winning OBEY for Jamie Jones and highly acclaimed BRUNO for Karl Golden. Ruka has recently wrapped on the feature BLUE STORY with director Rapman for Paramount Pictures and BBC Films.

YVES-MARIE OMNES – Sound

Yves-Marie Omnes is a French Production Sound Mixer working on international productions. While studying at art school he discovered sound and its involvement in cinema and decided to embark on a career as a Sound Engineer. He went on to work in television studios but very quickly felt constrained. 1992 he met Jean-Paul Mugel, a legendary French sound engineer, who offered him work on a Manoel de Oliveira film. This sparked an epiphany which made him decide to become a Boom Operator in cinema. For the next ten years he operated for Jean-Paul Mugel and had the chance to work on an eclectic range of films such as Oliver Stone's ALEXANDER; Mikael Hanneke's CACHÉ and Julian Schnabel's THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY.

In 2009 he stepped up to become a Production Sound Mixer and began working on French films, many by female directors. Some of these include Catherine Corsini's LEAVING with Kristin Scott Thomas; THREE WORLDS, also by Corsini; FOR A WOMAN directed by Diane Kurys and CHERRY ON THE CAKE, Laura Morante's directorial debut. In 2015 he started his collaboration with Luca Guadagnino on A BIGGER SPLASH, which led to CALL ME BY YOUR NAME and SUSPIRIA. Other



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prestigious directors with whom he's worked include John Madden on *MISS SLOANE*, Sally Potter on *MOLLY* and Sean Ellis on *ANTHROPOID* and *EIGHT FOR SILVER*. In 2019 he was nominated for a César Award for his work on Alex Lutz's comedy *GUY* and later for a David di Donatello for *CALL ME BY YOUR NAME*. Yves-Marie will soon start working on *THE DIG*, directed by Simon Stone starring Ralph Fiennes and Nicole Kidman.