



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Bright Star

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

Jane Campion on 'Bright Star'

Did you have a particular idea about the Romantics that led you to make Bright Star?

I'd read Richard Holmes' *Coleridge*, which is just stunning, and then Andrew Motion's *Keats*. But I was trying to write a character [for a different script] – an English creative writing teacher – and I didn't know much about poetry. Keats meets Fanny about halfway through Motion's book. Up until that time he was sworn against romance. He laughed when friends said they had fallen in love; he thought they were wasting their time and losing their ambition and focus. And then it happened to him! I found the story incredibly powerful and unexpected. When you think of the Romantics, you think of a cliché, but how they themselves began was very different. Keats was just a young man who was crazy about poetry, very ambitious to do his best work and very uncomfortable with women, because he felt that they didn't like him much.

The scenes of needles being pushed through cloth were reckoned by one critic to be about Fanny trying to break through convention. For me, Fanny is someone on the cusp between Jane Austen and the Romantics, coming from a position that's more to do with wit and reason.

She was very witty and quite wild. A contemporary described her as 'everything you could mean by the word unusual'. But she was also fascinated by fashion. Beau Brummel was her uncle – I didn't work that into the screenplay because he was already in exile at the time Fanny and Keats met. But she probably did learn a lot from him.

Were you wary of the biopic tag?

I thought, I'm not going to do a biopic, and anyway, I can't find a way of limiting the material in a sensible way – a biopic would be too general and too annoying. But then I realised I could do it from Fanny's point of view: meet Keats through her when she first meets him, and lose him when she does. It's like falling in love with him as she does, and also learning about poetry as she does.

The more fanciful sentiments of the Romantics can seem a little overblown today. Did you find a way to deal with that?

I tried not to force [poetry] down the throat. I wanted to introduce it the way that I became enthusiastic about it, which was to hear about sly rhymes and think, Hmm, this sounds sexy. After the letters and the biography, I started on the poems, and even if sometimes I'd really wrong-foot the meaning, I realised it was all right. It's like in the film when everyone finds 'Endymion' difficult, Fanny does too, but the poem's beginning is something really beautiful. I withheld the poetry until Keats starts with, 'When I have fears that I may cease to be/Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain.' It's almost like a soliloquy from Shakespeare, yet really it's just Keats saying, 'I hope I can reach my potential.' Then, once you get to 'Ode to a Nightingale', a fantastic poem, I hope people will be relaxed enough to hear a couple of verses, and go, 'Wow, that's like flying.'

In costume drama there's often a type of acting that's different from the sort you usually encourage. Did you have to de-programme the actors?

I chose actors who aren't very programmed anyway. Abbie Cornish is terribly instinctive and can only do what she believes in. She's not the sort of person that you say, 'Do this,' and she says yes. If it goes through her and feels right she'll do something incredible, but if it doesn't, she won't want to do it. We just talked a lot about being rather than acting, finding that essence of your character and then trusting it.

How did you approach the look of the film?

When I wasn't making movies I was looking at old films. I was really taken by the simplicity of Bresson's *A Man Escaped*. It's so tense that I realised visual manipulations sometimes take something away from a story, because the Keats story is so powerful, you just want to give it its space and feel like you're in the story without the authorship being too present. So I tried to disappear.

There's also the problem of creating a plausible semi-rural Hampstead, which is now of course part of inner London.

You mean my embarrassing Hampstead like an Italian hill town? If you look at Constable's paintings of the time, he painted in that area and it did look completely rural. The road into London looked like a country road. Hampstead at the time was a place where people took the waters. It was the Vale of Health.

I loved the final shot of the grieving Fanny walking through the wood reciting 'Bright Star', which is sublime.

That was actually [cinematographer] Greig Fraser's idea. We talked a lot about how simple we wanted to keep everything. He said, 'I think you should just do a really, really long track. We can do it in one shot and we'll avoid getting too close to her until this point. And then, because we've been very intimate with her during the story, we'll just bring it into a close-up and stay with her as long as we can.' I didn't know how Abbie was going to read the poem. I thought it would be a brittle, stumbling affair. We compromised. She thought she was going to just read it and I said, 'No, it's a lifebuoy at this point.' So we're discussing it and it's getting darker and we've got five minutes. They are wonderful, these young actors. They really want to give you what you want, but they also want to be free, they don't want to be anyone's pet. It's that tension all the time of 'Go away, I'm independent,' and 'I really want to please you.' That's really moving.

Interview by Nick James, *Sight & Sound*, December 2009

BRIGHT STAR

Directed by: Jane Campion
©: Pathé Productions Ltd., Screen Australia, BBC,
UK Film Council, New South Wales Film and Television Office,
Jan Chapman Productions
a Jan Chapman production
In association with: Caroline Hewitt
Production Companies: Brightstar Films Ltd, Jan Chapman Productions
Presented by: Pathé, Screen Australia, BBC Films, UK Film Council
In association with:
New South Wales Film and Television Office, Hopscotch
Italian Service Company: Panorama Films S.R.L.
Made with the support of: UK Film Council New Cinema Fund
Produced with assistance from:
New South Wales Film and Television Office
Financed with the assistance of: Screen Australia
Executive Producers: François Ivernel, Cameron McCracken,
Christine Langan, David M. Thompson
Produced by: Jan Chapman, Caroline Hewitt
Line Producer: Emma Mager
Unit Managers: Lee Robertson, Tim Davies, Dan Whitty
Unit/Location Manager (Italian Unit): Robin Melville
Production Co-ordinator: Donald Sabourin
Production Co-ordinator (Italian Unit): Benedetta Von Norman
Assistant Production Co-ordinators: Layla Mall, Geraldine Serafini
Production Accountant (UK): Trevor Stanley
Production Accountant (Australia): Kat Slowik
Location Manager: Michael Harm
Location Manager (Italian Unit): Stefania Antonini
Post-production Supervisor: Helen Lovelock
1st Assistant Director: Mike Elliott
1st Assistant Director (Italian Unit): Alessandro Trapani
2nd Assistant Director: Anthony Wilcox
2nd Assistant Director (Crowd): Candy Marlowe
2nd Assistant Director (Italian Unit): Luca Padriani
3rd Assistant Director: Zoe Liang
Script Supervisor: Heather Storr
 Casting Director: Nina Gold
Written by: Jane Campion
With research from the biography by: Andrew Motion
Script Consultant: Jan Chapman
Director of Photography: Greig Fraser
Steadicam: Grant Adams
1st Assistant Camera: Simon Tindall
1st Assistant Camera (Italian Unit): Sergio De Luca
2nd Assistant Camera: Henry Landgrebe
2nd Assistant Camera (Italian Unit): Carlo Rinaldi
Gaffer: Mark Clayton
Gaffer (Italian Unit): Massimo Bertucci
Key Grip: Gary Hutchings
Key Grip (Italian Unit): Paolo Tiberti
Stills Photographer: Laurie Sparham
Visual Effects by: FSM
Visual Effects Consultants (UK): CIS London Ltd
Special Effects Supervisor: Mark Holt
Graphic Designer: Amy Merry
Editor: Alexandre de Franceschi
1st Assistant Editor: Louise Kan
2nd Assistant Editor: Luca De Franceschi
Production Designed by: Janet Patterson

Visual Research: Charlotte Watts
Supervising Art Director: David Hindle
Art Director: Christian Huband
Art Director (Italian Unit): Stefano Ortolani
Set Decorator: Charlotte Watts
Prop Master: David 'Springer' Horrill
Property Buyers: Stella Fox, Karen Long
Construction Manager: Alan Chesters
Costumes Designed by: Janet Patterson
Assistant Costume Designer: Debbie Scott
Make-up/Hair Designer: Konnie Daniel
Make-up/Hair Artists: Loz Schiavo, Jane Logan
Crowd Make-up Supervisor: Emma Sheldrick
Hair Research/Consultation: Raphael Salley, Renya Xydis
Wigs Supplied by: London Wigs
Title Design by: FSM
Music by: Mark Bradshaw
Choreographer: Jack Murphy
Sound Supervisors: John Dennison, Tony Vaccher
Production Sound Mixer: John Midgley
Sound Recordist (Italian Unit): Angelo Bonanni
Re-recording Mixers: Tony Vaccher, John Dennison
Sound Effects Designer: Craig Butters
Stunt Co-ordinator: Glenn Marks
Adviser: Andrew Motion
Calligraphy Consultants: Cherrell Avery, Mark L'Argent
Animals Supplied by: Animals O Kay
Unit Publicist: Emma Davie
Filmed at: Elstree Studios

Cast

Abbie Cornish (*Fanny Brawne*)
Ben Wishaw (*John Keats*)
Paul Schneider (*Charles Brown*)
Kerry Fox (*Mrs Brawne*)
Edie Martin (*Toots*)
Thomas Brodie-Sangster (*Samuel*)
Claudie Blakley (*Maria Dilke*)
Gerard Monaco (*Charles Dilke*)
Antonia Campbell-Hughes (*Abigail*)
Samuel Roukin (*Reynolds*)
Amanda Hale, Lucinda Raikes (*Reynolds sisters*)
Samuel Barnett (*Mr Severn*)
Jonathan Aris (*Mr Hunt*)
Olly Alexander (*Tom Keats*)
Francois Testory (*dance master*)
Theresa Watson (*Charlotte*)
Vincent Franklin (*Dr Bree*)
Eileen Davies (*Mrs Bentley*)
Roger Ashton-Griffiths (*shopkeeper*)
Sally Reeve (*landlady*)
Sebastian Armesto (*Mr Haslam*)
Adrian Schiller (*Mr Taylor*)
Alfred Harmsworth (*Charles Dilke Jr*)
Lucas Motion (*suitor at ball*)
Topper (*the cat*)

UK/Australia 2009©

119 mins

BIG SCREEN CLASSICS**Thelma and Louise**

Sun 1 Aug 18:00; Sat 14 Aug 20:35; Sat 28 Aug 20:20

Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice

Mon 2 Aug 20:40; Fri 13 Aug 20:45; Wed 18 Aug 17:50 (+ pre-recorded intro by Julie Lobalzo Wright, University of Warwick); Mon 23 Aug 14:30

Bright Star

Tue 3 Aug 20:30; Fri 27 Aug 17:50; Mon 30 Aug 18:10

Boyz N the Hood

Wed 4 Aug 17:45 (+ pre-recorded intro by film critic Leila Latif);
Mon 9 Aug 20:50

Les Demoiselles de Rochefort (The Young Ladies of Rochefort)

Thu 5 Aug 17:50; Thu 26 Aug 17:40

The Big Lebowski

Fri 6 Aug 20:45; Mon 16 Aug 20:50; Wed 25 Aug 14:15

Only Angels Have Wings

Sat 7 Aug 12:00; Tue 24 Aug 14:15; Tue 31 Aug 20:30

A Farewell to Arms

Sun 8 Aug 12:20; Fri 20 Aug 14:30; Wed 25 Aug 18:00
(+ pre-recorded intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-large)

Matewan

Tue 10 Aug 14:15; Sun 15 Aug 18:20; Sat 21 Aug 12:20

Cutter's Way

Wed 11 Aug 17:50 (+ pre-recorded intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-large); Tue 17 Aug 14:30; Fri 20 Aug 20:50; Fri 27 Aug 20:50

The New World

Thu 12 Aug 14:30; Sun 22 Aug 12:00

Big Wednesday

Thu 19 Aug 17:50; Sun 29 Aug 18:10