



EVENT

The Power of the Dog + Jane Campion in Conversation

Jane Campion in conversation with Noah Baumbach, presented in partnership with Directors UK.

‘They didn’t know who the hell they were any more, the young fellows – cowhands or moving picture people.’ So complains Montana rancher Phil Burbank in Thomas Savage’s 1967 novel *The Power of the Dog*, set in 1925. By that point, a kid might model himself after a movie character more than any cowboy in living memory. (‘A fellow name of W.S. Hart had got to be sort of their God,’ Savage writes of the silent-screen star.)

These lines aren’t in Jane Campion’s pulse-thrumming adaptation, but the concerns over masculinity and wearing the trousers (or the chaps) definitely are. ‘What kind of man would I be, if I did not help my mother?’ intones the opening voiceover, which, like much else in the movie, passes by our defences under a familiar guise only to settle deep into our bones.

The Power of the Dog presents as a ranch family feud in the making, not an uncommon set-up in the American western (see *The Big Country*, 1958). But it’s all in the way Campion moves us through the psychodrama, coiling its grip tighter ever so gradually. Phil (Benedict Cumberbatch) rides herd over a thriving cattle ranch with his stolid brother George (Jesse Plemons), sharing the well-appointed lodge-like house left behind by their city-bound parents.

When George takes a liking to a widow, Rose (Kirsten Dunst, played with aching brittleness), who runs a small hotel, Phil feels their tight-knit fraternity threatened. He directs his cruel ire toward Rose and the boy he dubs ‘Miss Nancy’: her willowy, bookish son, Peter (Kodi Smit-McPhee, winning in his ungainly awkwardness and resembling a young Martin Landau).

George’s bearish kindness toward Rose, no doubt the first woman he’s ever loved, much less courted, leaves a warm glow. But though they marry and she moves in with the brothers, domestic bliss is elbowed aside by Phil’s alpha-dog campaign of torment. Under their valley’s big-sky brightness – so bracingly rendered by cinematographer Ari Wegner – there’s no escape for Rose (who’s first introduced obliquely, mopping).

Much of Jane Campion’s work (*The Piano*, 1993; the thankfully rediscovered *In the Cut*, 2003) has opened a Pandora’s box of sexual desire in search of shape and outlet, but *The Power of the Dog* at first seems set on diminishing true selves. A shamefaced Rose dives into depressive drinking – a tad precipitously in Campion’s screenplay – while Peter looks destined to become an outcast with his stalking about and vivisection studies. (Thomasin McKenzie’s vanishingly small role as a kitchen servant includes getting an unfortunate glimpse of Peter’s ex-pet bunny.)

But as Phil childishly acts out about his brother actually growing up, he’s also slowly self-destructing in his own fashion. With a suggestiveness more direct than earlier forays into the mythic West, the film orchestrates another kind of archetype in Phil: a man desperately trying to tamp down his sexuality by putting up a rough front to all around him. Cumberbatch summons Lee Marvin’s brash magnetic voice in creating a cowboy who’s know-it-all yet

deeply confused, as he idolises an old friend, Bronco Henry, who was so perfect and manly it hurts.

The camera lingers on Phil rubbing down Bronco's saddle, and communing with his memories with a bath in his Lawrentian secret place, a pond behind a thicket. Elsewhere Campion dots the film with earthy close-ups or hard edits (blood droplets on wheat, cattle castration); actual human touch is used sparingly and powerfully.

Where it all ends up feels at once cathartic and surprising, a denouement readable as lurid poetic justice and profound tragedy (our ears somehow pricked along the way by the odd high horns in Jonny Greenwood's score). Palpably curious about this environment, Campion again perches us on an edge of civilisation, as in *The Piano* (indeed, a piano proves central to Rose's struggles), one that is more secure yet stricken with its own unresolved tensions and violence.

An early interior pan, tracking the world outside the Burbanks' house through its windows, is echoed later on in a way that underlines how Campion has drawn out the instability at the heart of the American West's handed-down myths of projected authority and all-consuming (yet often weirdly chaste) machismo. While the resolution of *The Power of the Dog* puts a lid on things in a way many past Campion movies don't, it's a most welcome return to feature-filmmaking for her after two seasons of *Top of the Lake* arcs.

Nicolas Rapold, *Sight and Sound*, December 2021

THE POWER OF THE DOG

Directed by: Jane Campion

Production Companies: See-Saw Films, Bad Girl Creek, Max Films

In association with: Brightstar

Presented: Netflix

In association with: New Zealand Film Commission, Cross City Films, BBC Film

Executive Producers: Simon Gillis, Rose Garnett, John Woodward

Produced by: Jane Campion, Tanya Seghatchian, Emile Sherman, Iain Canning, Roger Frappier

Co-producers: Libby Sharpe, Chloe Smith

Line Producer: Chloe Smith

Developed with the Assistance of: Michelle Pearce

Unit Production Manager: Moira Grant

Key Production Coordinator: Linda Fenwick

Financial Controller: Steven McKinnon

Post-production Accounting: Deborah Eastwood

Post-production Supervisor: Colleen Clarke

1st Assistant Director: Phil Jones

2nd Assistant Director: Renata Blaich

Script Supervisor: Kathleen Thomas

Casting: Nikki Barrett, Tina Cleary, Nina Gold

US Casting Consultant: Carmen Cuba

Associate Casting - New Zealand: Linda McFetridge

Written by: Jane Campion

Based on the book by: Thomas Savage

Script Consultant: Tanya Seghatchian

Dramaturge: Rachel House

Creative Dream Consultant: Kim Gillingham

Director of Photography: Ari Wegner

Splinter Unit Director of Photography: Grant Adams

A Camera Operator: Grant Adams

Steadicam Operator: Grant Adams

Gaffer: Thad Lawrence

Senior Lighting Technician: Warwick Millar

Key Grip: Sam Strain

Stills Photographer: Kirsty Griffin

Visual Effects Supervisor: Jay Hawkins

Visual Effects by: Alt VFX

Special Effects Supervisor: Brendon Durey

Editor: Peter Sciberras

Production Designer: Grant Major

Visual Design Consultant: Leonie Savvides

Visual Researcher: Phil Clark

Supervising Art Director: Mark Robins *Art Director/On-set Art*

Director: George Hamilton

Art Director: Nick Connor

On-set Art Director: Matt Austin

Assistant Art Director: Yvonne Yip

Set Designer: Daniel Koene, Sarah Cathie

Set Decorator: Amber Richards

Set Dressers: Benjamin Whale, Gemma Richardson, Kirsten Nicholls

Concept Artists: Liam Beck, Polly Zee Walker

Property Master: Phred Palmer

Construction Supervisor: Joe Robert Moors

Costume Designer: Kirsty Cameron

Assistant Costume Designer: Emily Carter

Costume Supervisor: Alice Baker

Make-up and Hair Designer: Noriko Watanabe

Make-up Head of Department: Deirdre Cowley

Titles Designer: Peter Long

Original Music by: Jonny Greenwood

Music Supervisor: Andrew Kotatko

Choreographer: Ross McCormack

Sound Designer: Dave Whitehead

Production Sound Mixer: Richard Flynn

Boom Operator: Sandy Wakefield

Re-recording Mixers: Robert Mackenzie, Tara Webb

Co-supervising Sound Editor: Tara Webb

Supervising Sound Editor: Robert Mackenzie

Dialogue & ADR Supervisor: Leah Katz

Foley Artist: Mario Vaccaro

Foley Recordist: Alex Francis

Foley Mixer: Steve Burgess

Foley Editor: Steve Burgess

Stunt Co-ordinator: Mark Harris

Dialect Coach US: Joy Ellison

Dialect Coach New Zealand: Jim McClarty

Horse Master: Adrian Stent

Publicist: Tracey Mair

Cast

Benedict Cumberbatch (*Phil Burbank*)
Kirsten Dunst (*Rose Gordon*)
Jesse Plemons (*George Burbank*)
Kodi Smit-McPhee (*Peter Gordon*)
Thomasin McKenzie (*Lola*)
Genevieve Lemon (*Mrs Lewis*)
Keith Carradine (*the Governor*)
Frances Conroy (*old lady*)
Ken Radley (*barkeep*)
Sean Keenan (*Sven*)
George Mason (*Cricket*)
Ramontay McConnell (*Theo*)
David Denis (*Angelo*)
Cohen Holloway (*Bobby*)
Max Mata (*Juan*)
Josh Owen (*Lee*)
Alistair Sewell (*Jock*)
Eddie Campbell (*Stan*)
Alice Englert (*Buster*)
Bryony Skillington (*Queenie*)
Jacque Drew (*Jeanie*)
Piimio Mei (*Sue Ella*)

Edith Poor (*Tanya*)
Vadim Ledogorov (*older man*)
Julie Forsyth (*Mrs Mueller*)
Peter Carroll (*old gent*)
Alison Bruce (*governor's wife*)
Karl Willetts (*Bill*)
David T. Lim (*cook*)
Adam Beach (*Edward Nappo*)
Maeson Stone Skuggedal (*Edward Nappo's son*)
Ian Harcourt (*undertaker assistant*)

New Zealand/Australia 2021
126 mins

Courtesy of Netflix

Presented in partnership with Directors UK. Directors UK is the professional association of UK screen directors. It is a membership organisation representing the creative, economic and contractual interests of nearly 8,000 members - the majority of working TV and film directors in the UK.



JANE CAMPION

Born 30 April 1954 in Wellington, New Zealand

All Australian unless stated

- 2021** **The Power of the Dog** (New Zealand/ Australia) director/screenplay/producer
- 2013** **Top of the Lake** director/screenplay/executive producer (Australia/New Zealand/UK) TV mini-series
- 2009** **Bright Star** (UK/Australia) director/screenplay
- 2007** **Lady Bug** director (segment of portmanteau film **Chacun son cinéma ou ce petit coup au coeur quand la lumière s'éteint et que le film commence**; France)
- 2006** **The Water Diary** (short) director/screenplay incorporated in portmanteau film **8** (France/ Switzerland; 2008)
- 2003** **In the Cut** (UK/US) director/screenplay
- 1999** **Holy Smoke** (US) director/screenplay
- 1996** **Portrait of a Lady** (UK/US) director
- 1993** **The Piano** (Australia/France) director/screenplay
- 1990** **An Angel at My Table** (New Zealand/Australia/UK; 3 part TV mini-series abridged version shown theatrically) director
- 1989** **Sweetie** director/screenplay/based on an idea by/casting
- 1986** **Two Friends** (TV film) director
- 1985** **Dancing Daze** (TV series) director of 1 episode
- 1984** **Passionless Moments** (short) director/screenplay
After Hours (short) director/screenplay
Mishaps of Seduction and Conquest (short) director/screenplay
Passionless Moments (short) director/producer/director of photography/camera operator
- 1983** **A Girl's Own Story** (short) director/ screenplay
- 1982** **Peel** (short) director/screenplay/editor
- 1980** **Tissues** (short) director

IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

The Power of the Dog+ Jane Campion in conversation with Noah Baumbach

Tue 1 Mar 19:15

GFF Opening Gala: The Outfit + pre-recorded Q&A with director Graham Moore and actor Mark Rylance

Wed 2 Mar 20:20

Preview: Rebel Dread + Q&A with Don Letts

Thu 3 Mar 18:00

Member Picks: Evita

Fri 4 Mar 17:50

Doctor Who: Revelation of the Daleks

Sat 5 Mar 12:00

Mark Kermode Live in 3D at the BFI

Mon 7 Mar 18:10

Woman with a Movie Camera Preview: True Things + Q&A with Director Harry Wootliff

Mon 7 Mar 20:35

Hive+ pre-recorded Q&A with filmmakers

Tue 8 Mar 18:15

TV Preview: Gentleman Jack Series 2 + Q&A with writer Sally Wainwright and actors Suranne Jones and Sophie Rundle

Wed 9 Mar 18:10

GFF International Women's Day Gala: Happening (L'évenement) + Pre-recorded Q&A with Director Audrey Diwan

Wed 9 Mar 20:40

TV Preview: Inside No. 9 + Q&A with creators Reece Shearsmith and Steve Pemberton, and executive producer Adam Tandy

Fri 11 Mar 20:40

GFF Closing Gala: Murina

Sun 13 Mar 19:00

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