



**WOMAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA PREVIEW
POWERED BY JAGUAR**

True Things

+ Q&A with director Harry Wootliff

Director's Notes by Harry Wootliff

True Things is a cautionary tale of a destructive sexual relationship that is both complex and ordinary – a relationship so familiar to us that it's almost a rite of passage. It is a love story of sorts, which looks at the fragility of a woman's sense of self; at how women use relationships to explore their identity. Kate has lost a sense of who she really is, and accepted a version of herself that is shaped both by society, and by those close to her. We see how on her journey towards autonomy, she is compelled to let herself become consumed and derailed by a man, before eventually discovering self-authenticity. *True Things* is highly subjective and intimate and is really, fundamentally, about a woman's relationship with herself.

Notes on the film – by Hannah McGill

Early on in *True Things*, soon-to-be lovers Kate (Ruth Wilson) and 'Blond' (Tom Burke) discuss the strange urge to jump that can strike someone looking down from a tall building. The impulse, says Blond, is 'life-confirming', rather than suicidal: 'You *could* do it; but you don't.' The relationship that he and Kate are commencing will test exactly such distinctions and divisions – for her, at least. In her early thirties, Kate is at a stage of life that sees friends, family and strangers alike all powerfully invested in how responsible, respectable and future-focused she's being. After all, a woman can't cast about uncertainly forever... can she? 'You need to get your priorities right,' scolds Kate's friend and colleague Alison (Hayley Squires), who is already raising a brood of kids. What Kate finds herself prioritising, however, is not the future hope of a nuclear family. It is the intense, intermittent attention of a man whose name she doesn't even know.

Based on the 2010 novel *True Things About Me* by Deborah Kay Davies, Harry Wootliff's follow-up to her award-winning feature debut *Only You* anatomises a relationship experience as commonplace as it is shrouded in denial and shame. Who hasn't pursued a love affair that had friends and family shaking their heads in worry and disapproval? How many of us have let risk into our lives, not through naivete or coercion, but *knowingly* – with every sense that anguish may ensue? And which among us hasn't, sometimes, just wanted to jump?

True Things addresses this experience from the intensely subjective viewpoint of a character who is neither victim nor dupe, but a trapped soul for whom the chance to live more vividly is too tempting to resist. What looks like degradation from the outside feels – initially, at least – like bliss. For a film to acknowledge the visceral appeal and even the value of a crude, torrid, potentially dangerous liaison is taboo. As viewers, we're accustomed to heavy signposting: that casual sex spells danger; that the woman who goes 'off the rails' will face severe penalties, if she even survives; that behaving yourself is its own reward. Through dazzling performances by Ruth Wilson and Tom Burke, however, and a perceptive, witty script by Wootliff and Molly Davies,

True Things invites us to consider another angle on the 'toxic' relationship: one from which it offers welcome relief from the well-worn grooves of what's supposed to be good for us. What's toxic, after all, can also be intoxicating...

Harry Wootliff here works once again with Tristan Goligher of The Bureau, whose recent productions include Harry Macqueen's *Supernova*, starring Colin Firth and Stanley Tucci; Aleem Khan's *After Love*, with Joanna Scanlan; and *Little Joe*, directed by Jessica Hausner and starring Emily Beecham and Ben Whishaw. Further headiness is added to the *True Things* brew by the extraordinary cinematography of rising star Ashley Connor, whose agile, inquisitive camera takes us right to the fast-beating heart of the charged relationship between Kate and Blond.

Irreverent, unpredictable and intense, *True Things* showcases in its lead performances the range and charisma of two of the UK's most dynamic and appealing performers and affirms Harry Wootliff as a sharp and empathetic chronicler of the mores of modern love. Whether it lands as a warning, a reminder, or a glimpse of paths not taken, it will resonate with anyone who knows how it feels to throw caution to the winds.

Biographies

Harry Wootliff is a writer and director. Her first feature film *Only You* (starring Laia Costa and Josh O'Connor) premiered at the 2018 London Film Festival. For *Only You*, she won the BIFA award for Best Debut Director, and was nominated for the BAFTA Award for Outstanding Debut.

Harry's debut short film *Nits* was BAFTA-nominated and selected for Cannes Directors' Fortnight. Her second short *Trip* premiered at Berlin Film Festival, won Best Short Film at Bradford International Film Festival, and was screened at 30 festivals worldwide. Harry was named as one of The Observer's Rising Stars for Film in 2019.

Ruth Wilson is a multi-award-winning actress and producer of stage, screen and television. Described by *The Guardian* as a 'courageous, edgy and compelling talent', Wilson has become one of Britain's most lauded artists. This year she was awarded an MBE for services to Drama.

Wilson's first major TV role in the BBC's 2006 miniseries *Jane Eyre* earned her a BAFTA and Golden Globe nomination for Best Actress. Subsequent television performances include Mrs Coulter in the BBC/HBO *His Dark Materials*; Alison Bailey in Showtime's *The Affair*, for which she won a Golden Globe for Best Actress in a Drama Series in 2015; and Alice Morgan in *Luther*. In 2019 she was BAFTA-nominated for her performance as her own grandmother in the BBC miniseries, *Mrs Wilson*, which she also executive produced.

Film performances have seen Wilson work with a range of directors including Lenny Abrahamson, Gore Verbinski, Joe Wright, John Cameron Mitchell and Steven Knight. For *Dark River*, directed by Clio Barnard, Wilson received a BIFA Best Actress nomination. Most recently she appeared in the Emmy-nominated HBO film *Oslo*, directed by Bartlett Sher and produced by Steven Spielberg and Marc Platt.

Wilson is a mainstay on the London and Broadway stages and the recipient of three Olivier Award nominations and two Tony Award nominations. Most recently, the Broadway production of *King Lear* saw her play both Cordelia and The Fool opposite Glenda Jackson. In 2013 Wilson made her debut as a

theatre director with *The El Train*, a series of Eugene O'Neill one-act plays performed at Hoxton Hall.

In 2020 Wilson set up her production company, Lady Lazarus. *True Things* is the first film to be made under the Lady Lazarus umbrella. Other projects include TV and film productions in partnership with HBO and The Ink Factory.

Tom Burke was most recently seen in Netflix's highly acclaimed series *The Crown*, opposite Helena Bonham Carter, and as Orson Welles in David Fincher's Oscar-nominated feature *Mank*. Prior to that, he played the lead role of Anthony in Joanna Hogg's feature *The Souvenir*, which won the World Cinema Grand Jury Prize: Dramatic at Sundance 2019 and for which he was nominated for a BIFA and a Critics' Circle Award for Best Actor. Other recent credits include onstage as John Rosmer in *Rosmerholm, The Deep Blue Sea* at The National Theatre; the BBC mini-series *War and Peace*; and as Athos in *The Musketeers* also for the BBC. Upcoming releases include the independent feature *Klokkenluider*, Sky's *Extinction* opposite Paapa Essiedu; and Alan Moore's *The Show*. Tom is currently filming Sebastian Lelio's *The Wonder* opposite Florence Pugh for Netflix, and will shortly be seen reprising his role as Cormoran Strike in the next instalment of JK Rowling's acclaimed series for the BBC, opposite Holliday Grainger.

Production notes

TRUE THINGS

Directed by: Harry Wootliff

©: BBC, The British Film Institute, True Things Films Ltd

A production from: Lady Lazarus, Riff Raff UK, The Bureau

Presented by: BBC Films, BFI

Executive Producers: Rose Garnett, Eva Yates, Lizzie Francke, Vincent Gadelle

Produced by: Tristan Goligher, Ruth Wilson, Ben Jackson, Jude Law

Line Producer: Eimhear McMahon

Production Co-ordinator: Elena Santamaria

Production Accountant: Habib Rahman

Location Manager: Ben Lee

Post-production Supervisor: Gerardine O'Flynn

1st Assistant Director: Anthony Wilcox

2nd Assistant Director: Iain Atkinson

Script Supervisor: Sara J. Doughty

Casting Director: Kahleen Crawford

Written by: Harry Wootliff, Molly Davies

Based on the book True Things About Me by: Deborah Kay Davies

Director of Photography: Ashley Connor

Steadicam Operators: Stamos Triantafyllo, Henry Landgrebe,

Svetlana Miko

1st Assistant Camera: Dave Pearce

2nd Assistant Camera: Piotr Perliński, Ania Bahadrian

VFX by: Ghost VFX UK

Special Effects: SPFX Ltd.

Editor: Tim Fulford

Production Designer: Andy Drummond

Art Director: David Jennings

Costume Designer: Matthew Price

Hair & Make-up Supervisor: Ang Oxley-Evans

Hair & Make-up Designer: Nadia Stacey

Hair & Make-up Supervisor: Anna Morena

Main Titles by: Alphabet

End Roller by: Endcrawl

Composer: Alex Baranowski

Music Supervisor: Connie Farr

Production Sound Mixers: William Whale, Steve Haywood

Sound Re-recording Mixer: Per Boström

Supervising Sound Editor: Joakim Sundström

Stunt Co-ordinator: Paul Heasman

Cast

Ruth Wilson (*Kate*)

Tom Burke (*Blond*)

Hayley Squires (*Alison*)

Elizabeth Rider (*mum*)

Frank McCusker (*dad*)

Ann Firkbank (*Nan*)

Tom Weston Jones (*Rob*)

Nathan Ampofo (*Gavin*)

Michael Moreland (*David*)

Charlie Heptinstall (*young man*)

Gledys Ibarra (*care worker*)

Joshua Sinclair-Evans (*party man 1*)

Jordan John (*party man 2*)

Arthur Cull (*man on beach*)

Alice Snow (*kitchen demonstrator*)

UK 2021

102 mins

Courtesy of Picturehouse Entertainment



Woman with a Movie Camera is powered by Jaguar and generously supported by Jane Stanton

BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email prognotes@bfi.org.uk

The British Film Institute is a charity registered in England and Wales No. 287780