



NEW RELEASES

Brian and Charles

Director's Statement

Brian and Charles is about a lot of things. I wouldn't want to dictate to anyone who watches it what interpretation they should have. Primarily, it's about loneliness and the power of friendship and companionship. Charles is such a blank slate that you can put a lot of interpretations onto him and I think it works. When we made the short (which inspired the film), we got a lot of comments about how people related to their relationship to the characters in totally different ways, whether it is raising a child or having a parent with dementia. Therefore, whatever interpretation you have, you are CORRECT! But also, it is there just to make you laugh.

It's such a bizarre premise and Charles is so ridiculous looking that my intention with this film was always to treat it as seriously as possible. Make it look like a real documentary, not a tried and tested Mockumentary but something more cinematic and atmospheric. Initially, I wanted to do that as I thought it would be funny to treat these characters completely earnestly. But additionally, in the story, there is a lot of heart and tragedy, and it deserved to be taken seriously. You need to believe in their relationship and that Charles is more than a mannequin's head stuck onto a washing machine. Once we achieved this, then I think the comedy takes care of itself. I'm excited to see if audiences agree and can't wait to share it with you all!

Q&A with David Earl (Brian)

Tell us about the script, how it came into being? And how did the feature develop from the short film?

I had been performing as the character 'Brian' for quite a few years on the stand-up circuit and also had my own, terrible, internet radio phone-in show as 'Brian'. Rupert, the producer, once rang in using some voice simulator software and pretended to be a robot. That was the birth of Charles and that's where their awkward relationship began. Trying to connect with one another over Skype. We then decided to bring Charles to life, physically, and try them both out in front of an audience, so Chris went away and built him, and what a wonderful job he did, too. From there we decided to make a short film and off the back of that, Film4 asked if we wanted to develop a feature.

How has the character of Brian evolved from your stand-up character in this film?

Well, doing stand-up, although I'm in character, the way you react in the moment onstage can all depend on how you're feeling at that time, and what's happening in front of you in the audience. So, I would say 'Brian', as a stand-up character, hasn't any fixed rules at all and can be shy, loud, placid, angry, silly, serious, all of these things. Whereas when writing him for the film, Chris and I definitely leaned towards trying to make him more likeable. And perhaps, accessible. More sweet and vulnerable, but still a bit odd. Well, very.

What elements were you particularly excited to film?

I just wanted to film Chris standing in a cardboard box and then introduce this weird little character to the world. I loved the idea that Charles would exist

forever on screen, in this little story and I love how terrible he looks. I mean, it's obviously just a bloke walking about in a box. It felt cheeky and naughty making the film, like we were getting away with murder, and I still can't believe Film4 let us make it. I love Film4, have I mentioned that?

How did you work with Chris Hayward to develop the story, these characters and performances?

I can't remember much of the writing process. I know we spent a very long weekend, chatting things over to begin with. We'd be on FaceTime a lot, and send notes back and forth, trying to work out each step of the way. We'd talk about characters from our own lives and from obscure documentaries we'd seen that we wanted to place in the film. Focusing on how these moments from docs had made us feel and how we wanted to create the same feelings in *Brian and Charles*. Film4 were so helpful with the writing process as well, such useful notes along the way, guiding us to our final draft.

Have there been any challenges for you in playing Brian in this film?

Yes, I find acting incredibly embarrassing and hard. Someone reminded me recently that apparently I spoke about pulling out of the film and getting someone else in to play 'Brian'. I don't recall that, but it wouldn't surprise me. So, that side of things is tough for me, being able to let go and relax enough to do the job. So, being able to make the film with my mates helped to no end. I couldn't have done it otherwise. By the way, there's no way I'm ever doing a sex scene, I'm sorry ladies, but that's not happening.

The film has a delicate balance of comedy and drama, how did you unlock both the humour and tragedy in the script?

Not sure really, I just try and put both into everything I do. If you don't make the audience feel anything, then I guess they won't want to watch the screen for more than 5 minutes. But then again, I don't know what I'm talking about... I've always loved documentaries about obsessives: American Movie, Monster Road etc. Broken people who have not a lot going on in their lives except their little passions. Putting their sadness into their work; it's admirable. I want to hug them. I mean, I'm a gnat's bollock away from being them myself. In fact, I am them. Oh God, this is therapy. I want to hug me now.

What has it been like working with director Jim Archer? How have the three of you worked to develop the story, these characters and performances?

Jim is my perfect director: calm, funny, great taste. He made everything so simple. Really collaborative, really listens... but also knows exactly what he wants. Like I said, acting terrifies me, so with Jim at the helm it was smooth sailing.

Q&A with Chris Hayward (Charles)

Tell us what Brian and Charles is about?

There are several themes running through the film; loneliness, friendship, love and loss. But it's mainly about the journey of a ridiculous man and a ridiculous robot.

What were you looking to find in the character of Charles? What emotions or feelings were you hoping to bring to the surface?

The live comedy version of Charles was more 'adult' both in personality and language! We gave him a little more innocence in the film. It was also a case

of ensuring he was likeable because he can be a pretty crazy looking monstrosity at times. The main concern we had was if people were going to believe him as a real character at all and not just see it as a man in a mad costume. On the first day of filming I heard one of the crew say ‘It’s weird, you actually believe he’s real’, so I figured we’d get away with it!

What have been the challenges for you in playing the role of Charles?

The physicality of being Charles is tricky mainly because I can’t really see anything when I’m in there. Even things like walking in a straight line are difficult. There is only a small gap where I can glimpse the ground so in a rehearsal I’d have to memorise markers like the position of a pebble or a crack in the pavement and try and follow those when we filmed, hoping I was heading the right way. Between takes people would hand me food and drink through a flap in his shirt. Then there was the dancing, which I learned from Janet Jackson.

What do you hope audiences will take away from this film?

We really set out just to make something really funny and a bit different, so while there are plenty of real-world elements that people will be able to relate to, I hope they come away from watching with a smile on their face, having laughed loads.

Production notes

BRIAN AND CHARLES

Directed by: Jim Archer
©: Brian and Charles Film Ltd, Channel Four Television Corporation, The British Film Institute
Developed with the assistance of: Film4
Made with the support of: BFI’s Film Fund
Presented by: Focus Features
This production was made possible by the support of: HM Treasury & DCMS’ Film and TV Production Restart Scheme
International Sales: Bankside Films Ltd
Executive Producers: Damian Jones, Lauren Dark, Ollie Madden, Daniel Battsek, Mary Burke, Jim Reeve Halmi
Produced by: Rupert Majendie
Line Producer: John Palfrey-Smith
Production Manager: Tricia Cooklin
Production Accountant: Patrick Kelly
Supervising Location Manager: Julia Gurry
Location Manager: Geraint ‘Giz’ Jones
Post-production Supervisor: Jackie Vance
1st Assistant Director: Ina Lüders
Script Supervisor: Dionne Grant
Casting Director: Catherine Willis
Written by: David Earl, Chris Hayward
Director of Photography: Murren Tullet
Special Effects Supervisor: Perrt Costello
Editor: Jo Walker
Production Designer: Hannan Purdy Foggin
Art Director: Jo Scholar
Costume Designer: Gabriela Yiaxis

Hair and Make-up Designer: Red Miller
Colourist: Matthieu Toullet
Music by: Daniel Pemberton
Music Supervisor: David Fish
Production Sound Mixer: Calum Sample
Re-recording Mixer: Robert Farr
Supervising Sound Editor: David Crane
Stunt Co-ordinator: Kevin Smith

Cast

David Earl (*Brian*)
Chris Hayward (*Charles*)
Louise Brealey (*Hazel*)
Jaime Michie (*Eddie*)
Nina Sosanya (*Pam*)
Lynn Hunter (*Winnie*)
Lowri Izzard (*Katrina*)
Mari Izzard (*Suki*)
Cara Chase (*June*)
Sunil Patel (*Phil*)
Rishi Nair (*Stephen Anderson*)
Colin Bennett (*Arthur*)
Vivienne Soan (*toffee apple woman*)
David Edwards (*Oliver*)
Nicholas Asbury (*Stu*)

UK 2022
90 mins

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