



GARY OLDMAN

Prick Up Your Ears

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

With an Alan Bennett script based on John Lahr's biography of Joe Orton, Stephen Frears' film about the shifts in power in the playwright's relationship with the older Kenneth Halliwell was sure to have many witty lines and incisive insights into the London of the '50s and '60s, before reaching its tragic ending. Oldman (who'd acted in Orton's *Entertaining Mr Sloane* on stage) excels as the scandalising playwright.

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Alan Bennett on 'Prick Up Your Ears'

I wrote several drafts of the screenplay, but I wasn't happy with any of them. The temptation was to try and write it in a sub-Orton kind of language – that was one of the problems with the first script. Orton's language was very theatrical and it doesn't really work on film. One version had John Lahr working on the biography and me as a scriptwriter working on the script: an impossibly baroque idea. Eventually, I got something out, which included some of the John Lahr parts. We took this to Chrysalis Records, who at that time thought they wanted to make a film. We very nearly gave them the rights, but they let slip that they wanted to make a kind of English *Cage aux folles* and we back-pedalled smartly. After that, nothing happened for about four years, until Zenith took an interest.

To me, *Prick Up Your Ears* is really a film about marriage. Peggy Ramsay, Orton's agent, says that Halliwell was Orton's first wife. In a sense, it's what happens when someone marries early, at a period when they are struggling, and then becomes famous and thinks about jettisoning their first wife. And at that point Halliwell murdered Orton. I could have done it as a gay film but that would have just worked on one level and been of limited interest. In a sense, the '60s was the most difficult thing to portray. It's quite startling when you see Vanessa Redgrave in a mini-skirt. The recent past is the most remote of all. The '50s are fairly easy to do; the '60s are much harder. There's the whole question of AIDS now, which complicates things. It has made it even more of a historical film, in a way, because it is about a period that is now closed. In the film, there's a point where John Lahr asks Peggy Ramsay about the Festival of Britain. She says it was 'When it all came off the ration.' He says, 'You mean food?'; she replies, 'Oh, food, sex, life, everything.' What has happened now, of course, is that it has all gone back on the ration again.

I had to write it for people who don't know anything about Orton. But equally, you don't want to insult people who do know about him. You have to play it both ways. You have to take the plays on trust. You see the neon signs outside the theatre and get a glimpse of rehearsal, but if you are really interested in the plays you should see a documentary. I don't know how you dramatise the act of writing itself – it's always a problem. I suppose you can show the paper in the typewriter, then going in the bin, like they did in *Julia*, with Lillian Hellman endlessly screwing stuff up and chucking it away. In a way, Orton fulfilled what people want in a writer. He has a great gift, then he's punished for it. I think that satisfies something in a lot of people's minds.

I had complicated feelings about Orton, liking him and disliking him at the same time. I've always admired the writing and I like his cheek, but at the same time his self-assurance and conviction about his talent alienates me. When I read the diaries, I was relieved that my first play came out a year after he died. He slags off every play he goes to see: Peter Nichols, Tom Stoppard, the rest. I'm sure my play would have got the same treatment. I don't know if it's proper to say so, but Stephen and I differ slightly about the end. We originally shot a scene where Peggy Ramsay and the Lahrs all go back to Orton and Halliwell's old flat. It's all bright and cheerful and the couple living in it are very modern, but you get a sense of unease that this marriage is going to go wrong too. I liked the scene, but I can see that it didn't work in marketing terms.

Alan Bennett, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, May 1987

PRICK UP YOUR EARS

Director: Stephen Frears

Production Companies: Zenith Productions, Civilhand, British Screen, Channel Four

Producer: Andrew Brown

Production Accountant: Tony Miller

Production Co-ordinator: Lorraine Goodman

Production Manager: Ann Wingate

Location Manager: Rachel Neale

Producer's Secretary: Debbie Harding

1st Assistant Director: Michael Zimbrich

2nd Assistant Director: Lee Cleary

3rd Assistant Director: Adam Walton

Morocco Assistant Director: Hatimi Ahmed

Script Supervisor: Penny Eyles

Casting: Debbie McWilliams

Screenplay: Alan Bennett

Based on the biography by: John Lahr

Director of Photography: Oliver Stapleton

Camera Operator: David Morgan

Gaffer: Malcolm Davies

Stills Photography: Sarah Quill

Matte/Optical Effects: Optical Film Effects

Editor: Mick Audsley

Production Designer: Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski

Art Director: Phil Elton

Décor/Lettering Artist: Steve Hedinger

Collages: Bob Starrett

Scenic Artist: John Kirby Spotswood

Property Master: Ray Perry

Construction Manager: Ray Barrett

Costume Designer: Bob Ringwood

Wardrobe Supervisor: Patrick Wheatley

Make-up Supervisor: Elaine Carew

Title Design: Julian Rothenstein

Music: Stanley Myers

Music Performed by: John Harle's Berliner Band

Synthesizers: Hans Zimmer

Music Conductor/Orchestrations: John Harle

Music Recording: Chris Dibble

Sound Supervisor: Tony Jackson

Sound Recording: Peter Maxwell

Sound Editor: Brian Trenerry

Dialogue Editor: Katrina Sheldon

Unit Publicist: Zakiya Powell

Cast

Gary Oldman (*Joe Orton*)

Alfred Molina (*Kenneth Halliwell*)

Vanessa Redgrave (*Peggy Ramsay*)

Wallace Shawn (*John Lahr*)

Lindsay Duncan (*Anthea Lahr*)

Julie Walters (*Elsie Orton*)

James Grant (*William Orton*)

Frances Barber (*Leonie Orton*)

Janet Dale (*Mrs Sugden*)

Dave Atkins (*Mr Sugden*)

Margaret Tyzack (*Madame Lambert*)

Eric Richard (*education officer*)

William Job (*RADA chairman*)

Rosalind Knight, Angus Mackay (*RADA judges*)

Linda Spurrier (*RADA instructor*)

Charlotte Wodehouse (*Janet*)

Helena Michell, Sean Pertwee (*Orton's friends*)

Liam De Staic (*brickie*)

Charles McKeown (*Mr Cunliffe*)

Selina Cadell (*Miss Battersby*)

Bert Parnaby (*magistrate*)

Antony Carrick (*counsel*)

Neil Dudgeon (*policeman*)

Richard Wilson (*psychiatrist*)

Christopher Guinee (*publisher*)

Stevan Rimkus (*Kenneth*)

Michael Mueller (*1st BBC actor*)

Anthony Douse (*2nd BBC actor*)

John Kane (*director*)

Steven Mackintosh (*Simon Ward*)

Garry Cooper (*1st actor, 'Entertaining Mr Sloane'*)

Roger Lloyd Pack (*2nd actor*)

Joanne Connelly (*stage manager*)

John Moffatt (*wigmaker*)

Philippa Davies (*Peggy Ramsay's secretary*)

David Cardy (*Brian Epstein*)

Julie Legrand (*gallery owner*)

Noel Davis (*Philip*)

Jane Blackburn (*1st woman in gallery*)

Stella Richman (*2nd woman in gallery*)

Neville Phillips (*man in gallery*)

Jonathan Phillips (*youth outside lavatory*)

Richard Ireson (*man outside lavatory*)

Ahmed El Jheur (*1st Moroccan boy*)

Moktar Dagmouni (*2nd Moroccan boy*)

Sian Thomas (*Marilyn Orton*)

Stephen Bill (*George Barnett*)

Karl Johnson (*Douglas Orton*)

David Bradley (*undertaker*)

Simon Adams (*undertaker's boy*)

James Duggan (*labourer*)

Max Stafford Clark (*awards chairman*)

Mark Brignal (*Beatles' chauffeur*)

Joan Sanderson (*Anthea's mother*)

Neville Smith (*police inspector*)

Spencer Leigh (*constable*)

John Salthouse (*chauffeur*)

Robin Hooper (*mortuary attendant*)

Derek Jarman (*Patrick Proktor*)*

UK 1987

110 mins

* Uncredited

GARY OLDMAN

Meantime

Mon 17 Oct 20:40; Fri 28 Oct 17:50

Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead

Tue 18 Oct 18:05; Sun 6 Nov 18:20

Bram Stoker's Dracula

Wed 19 Oct 20:25 (+ intro by Christopher Frayling); Sat 29 Oct 20:30;
Wed 23 Nov 18:00

Prick Up Your Ears

Fri 21 Oct 20:30; Sun 13 Nov 18:20; Fri 25 Nov 20:40

JFK – Director's Cut

Sun 23 Oct 16:00; Sat 19 Nov 16:30

True Romance

Mon 24 Oct 20:40; Tue 22 Nov 20:30; Tue 29 Nov 18:00

The Firm – Director's Cut

Wed 2 Nov 21:00; Thu 10 Nov 18:15

The Contender

Fri 4 Nov 18:00; Mon 14 Nov 18:00

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy

Sat 5 Nov 20:20; Thu 24 Nov 17:55

Mank

Tue 8 Nov 20:15; Sat 26 Nov 17:20; Tue 29 Nov 20:20

Darkest Hour

Sat 12 Nov 12:20; Sat 19 Nov 20:30; Mon 21 Nov 14:30

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