



MEMBER PICKS

# Sunshine

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

It's 2057. The sun is dying and the Earth is in a precipitous state, with all life threatened as the planet turns into a frozen wasteland. Hope lies with the small crew of Icarus II, who are carrying a massive bomb that will hopefully jump-start the fading star. But the crew soon realises there's as great a danger aboard their vessel as there is in the celestial object that awaits them.

Written by Alex Garland, Danny Boyle's psychological thriller is a visually dazzling, genre-bending exercise in suspense.

[bfi.org.uk](http://bfi.org.uk)

## A contemporary review

In Danny Boyle's *Sunshine* we do not see people gathering in bars to watch newscasts from Paris or London and cheering on the heroic astronauts of Icarus II on their mission to revive the sun. When at last we get a glimpse of Earth, stuck in near-permanent winter, it's a rather unapocalyptic Christmas-card landscape with kids making snowmen. No one whoops it up at mission control, and for all we know the only person who realises the mission has succeeded in 'saving mankind and so on' is the sister of the ship's chief physicist Capa, who receives a video message from him. By eliminating the disaster-movie convention of giving doomsday an on-screen audience, as in the generically similar *Armageddon* (1998) and *The Day after Tomorrow* (2004), *Sunshine* removes the sickly screen-traversing sense of camaraderie in the face of catastrophe that – along with the spectacle of cities being destroyed – forms a part of those films' appeal. Yet Boyle's overturning of genre expectations is no mere nose-thumbing idiosyncrasy: *Sunshine*'s exclusion of the summer blockbusters' surrogate audience intensifies its grip on its actual audience.

Without stinting on popcorn thrills, Alex Garland's script consistently pits the viewer's desire to see the crew of Icarus II survive against the crew's own determination to complete their mission. The death of everyone on board is more or less unavoidable from the get-go, and as the film reaches its climax, all dramatic choices boil down to the need to reach the target, every chance of survival or escape ruled out by the depletion of the ship's oxygen supplies (despite the suggestion that three 'breathers' be killed to save the mission). Co-pilot Cassie, the film's most sympathetic character, is also the most frequently wrong, as when she chooses to save Capa and Captain Kaneda rather than extinguish a fire that threatens the entire ship. And yet, far from providing a neat opposition between the rational and the humanistic, the crew's motivation is nicely complicated by the uncertainty of the whole mission.

Capa's decision to dock with Icarus I, sent on the same mission seven years earlier, is made by weighing 'risk of detour, benefits of second bomb' as psych officer Searle puts it, with the scales tipped by the uncertainty that either payload will have the intended effect anyway. But Capa is using the abundance of imponderables to cover his curiosity about the fate of the first mission, and even his desire to rescue its crew. When, waxing poetic, he tells

Cassie that he is looking forward to seeing a new star born at the moment of his own immolation, he isn't just spinning her a line. All that is certain is death, and Capa's positive acceptance of this fact is only the obverse of the wish of Icarus I's captain, Pin backer, to abort the mission and make himself the last man alone with God. Likewise Searle's decision to stay on Icarus I to save two of his crewmates combines altruistic and nihilistic urges since it enables him to experience the sun's heat without a filter. Heroic self-sacrifice shades into death-drive.

As with Garland and Boyle's previous sci-fi collaboration *28 Days Later* (2002), this is the end of the world done without much in the way of laughs or kisses; visually, however, it is anything but gloomy, leaving the aggressively 'digital' look of the earlier film somewhat time-bound. Throughout, Boyle and ace DoP Alwin Kuchler (*Morvern Callar*, *Code 46*) exploit elemental contrasts of darkness and light, heat and cold, with the CGI and model work beautiful but mostly unobtrusive until the radically disorienting final scenes. As Pin backer fights Capa and Cassie aboard the tumbling payload, Boyle throws out temporal and spatial continuity – as well as a certain degree of comprehensibility – in a genuinely breath-taking sequence that combines visceral terror with Kubrickian wonder.

**Henry K. Miller, *Sight and Sound*, April 2007**

---

#### **SUNSHINE**

*Directed by:* Danny Boyle

©Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, Dune Entertainment LLC, TCF Hungary Film Rights Exploitation Limited Liability Company

*Production Company:* DNA Films Ltd

*Made in association with:* Dune Entertainment LLC, Major Studio Partners

*Presented by:* Fox Searchlight Pictures, DNA Films Ltd

*Presented in association with:* UK Film Council, Ingenious Film Partners

*Stockholm Shoot:* Poppis Production Service AB

*Produced by:* Andrew Macdonald

*Co-producer:* Bernard Bellew

*For DNA Films (Executive):* Allon Reich

*For DNA Films (Business Affairs):* Joanne Smith

*Production Accountant:* Wendy Ellerker

*Production Co-ordinator:* Kate Penlington

*Stockholm Shoot (Poppis Production Service AB):* René Zuber

*Unit Production Manager:* Bernard Bellew

*Post-production Supervisor:* Clare St. John

*1st Assistant Director:* Richard Styles

*2nd Assistant Director:* Carlos Fidel

*3rd Assistant Director:* Susan Drennan

*2nd Unit 1st Assistant Director:* Toby Ford

*2nd Unit 3rd Assistant Director:* Henry Forsyth

*Model Unit 1st Assistant Director:* Bryn Lawrence

*Script Supervisor:* Anna Worley

*2nd Unit Script Supervisor:* Sharon Mansfield

*Model Unit Script Supervisor:* Tess Malone

*Casting by:* Donna Isaacson, Gail Stevens

*Screenplay:* Alex Garland

*Director of Photography:* Alwin Kuchler

*2nd Unit Director of Photography:* Peter Talbot

*Model Unit Director of Photography:* Stuart Galloway

*Camera Operator:* Alastair Rae

*Focus Puller:* Olly Tellett

*2nd Unit Focus Pullers:* Alex Howe, Simon Heck

*Model Unit Focus Puller:* Faye

*Clapper Loaders:* Peter Byrne, Jason Dully

*2nd Unit Clapper Loaders:* Barney Crocker, Richard Copeman

*Model Unit Clapper Loader:* Jon Howard

*Key Grip:* Adrian McCarthy

*Steadicam Operators:* Paul Edwards, Alastair Rae

*Gaffer:* Reuben Garrett

*2nd Unit Gaffer:* Harry Wiggins

*Model Unit Gaffer:* Steve O'Donoghue

*Video Playback Operator:* Stuart Bridges

*Unit Stills Photographers:* Alex Bailey, Jay Maidment

*Visual Effects Supervisor:* Tom Wood

*Visual Effects Editor:* Mark Eckersley

*Visual Effects by:* Moving Picture Company

*Special Effects Supervisor:* Richard Conway

*Senior Special Effects Technician:* Sam Conway

*Senior Standby Special Effects Tech:* Mark White

*Senior Special Effects Technicians:* Terry Bridle, Andrew Kelly,

Jason Leinster, Nigel Stanley Nixon, Paul Stephenson, Dave Watson

*Wire Effects Co-ordinator:* Kevin Welch

*Senior Wire Operators:* Alan Perez, Neal Murray

*Model Unit Motion Control Operator:* Ian Menzies

*Model Unit Model Special Effects Co-ordinator:* Robbie Scott

*Model Unit Senior Model Special Effects Technicians:* Steve Onions, Mark Bullimore

*Video/Computer Supervisor:* Bob Bridges

*Model Maker:* Hester Clark

*HoD Modeller:* Pierre Bohanna

*Supervising Modeller:* Toby Hawkes

*Senior Modellers:* Adrian Getley, Tracey Curtis, Glenn Haddock

*Graphic Designer:* Anita Dhillon

*Graphic Animation (Mere Mortals Ltd.):* Anita Dhillon

*Editor:* Chris Gill

*1st Assistant Editor:* Emanuele Giraldo

*2nd Assistant Editor:* Tina Richardson

*Production Designer:* Mark Tildesley

*Supervising Art Director:* David Warren

*Art Directors:* Gary Freeman, Stephen Morahan, Denis Schnegg

*Model Unit Art Director:* Kate Grimble

*Stand-by Art Director:* Gavin Fitch

*2nd Unit Stand-by Art Director:* Remo Tozzi

*Assistant Art Directors:* Susan Whitaker, Guy Bradley

*Set Decorator:* Michelle Day

*Draughtsmen:* Peter Dorme, Matt Robinson, Emma Vane, Catherine Haugh

*Junior Draughtsman:* Oliver Goodier

*Storyboard Artist:* Brendan Houghton

*Property Master:* Nick Thomas

*Production Buyer:* Dominic Capon

*Construction Manager:* Thomas Martin

*Costume Designer:* Suttirat Anne Larlarb

*Assistant Costume Designer:* Nicole Young

*Costume Supervisor:* Michael Mooney

*Chief Make-up/Hair Designer:* Christine Blundell

*Pinbacker Make-up Designer:* Mark Coulier

*Make-up Artists:* Lesa Warrener, Nuria Mbomio

*Key Prosthetic Make-up Artists:* Duncan Jarman, Shaune Harrison

*Prosthetic Make-up Artist:* Matthew Smith

*End Titles Designed by:* Matt Curtis

*Colourist:* Jean-Clement Soret

*Negative Cutting:* Cutting Edge

*Music by:* John Murphy, Underworld

*Mystic Breaths:* The Choristers of Gloucester Cathedral

---

*Orchestra Conducted by:* Matt Dunkley  
*Music Executive:* Mike Knobloch  
*Music Contractors:* David Sabee, Simon James  
*Music Editor:* Andrew Wilkinson  
*Music Recorded/Mixed by:* Gustavo Borner  
*Sound Design:* Glenn Freemantle, Tom Sayers  
*Production Sound Mixer:* Tim Fraser  
*Boom Operator:* Will Towers  
*Re-recording Mixers:* John Hayward, Richard Pryke  
*Additional Re-recording:* Ian Tapp  
*Supervising Sound Editor:* Glenn Freemantle  
*Dialogue Editor:* Gillian Dodders  
*Sound Effects Editors:* Tom Sayers, Niv Adiri  
*Effects Editor:* Keith Tinman  
*ADR Mixers:* Paul Carr, Andy Thompson  
*ADR Editor:* Gillian Dodders  
*Foley Artist:* Nicolas Becker  
*Foley Recordist:* Philippe Amouroux  
*Foley Editor:* Hugo Adams  
*Scientific Consultant:* Brian Cox  
*Stunt Co-ordinator:* Julian Spencer  
*Dialect Coach:* Andrew Jack  
*Made at:* Three Mills Studios

**Cast**  
Rose Byrne (*Cassie*)  
Cliff Curtis (*Searle*)  
Chris Evans (*Mace*)  
Troy Garity (*Harvey*)  
Cillian Murphy (*Capa*)  
Hiroyuki Sanada (*Captain Kaneda*)  
Mark Strong (*Pinbacker*)  
Benedict Wong (*Trey*)  
Michelle Yeoh (*Corazon*)  
Chipo Chung (*voice of Icarus*)  
Paloma Baeza (*Capa's sister*)  
Archie Macdonald, Sylvie Macdonald (*children*)

USA/UK 2007©  
107 mins

---

## REGULAR PROGRAMME

### Member Picks: Sunshine

Thu 2 Feb 18:15

### Seniors: The Long Memory + intro and Q&A with film historian Marcus Powell

Mon 6 Feb 14:00

### Shadow + intro and discussion

Wed 8 Feb 18:20

### Art in the Making: Edward Hopper + intro by Steven Foxon, Curator BFI National Archive + Night Work

Thu 9 Feb 18:30

### African Odysseys: Free Renty: Lanier v. Harvard + intro and Q&A

Sat 11 Feb 14:00

### Silent Cinema: Neil Brand Presents Laurel and Hardy

Sun 12 Feb 16:00

### Woman with a Movie Camera: Galentine's Day: The Parent Trap 25th Anniversary

Mon 13 Feb 20:15

### Projecting the Archive: I'll Get You for This (aka Lucky Nick Cain) + intro by Rosie Taylor, Curatorial Archivist, BFI National Archive

Tue 21 Feb 18:20

### Experimenta: Right of Way + Q&A with artists Dan Guthrie, Ufuoma Essi and Arjuna Neuman, hosted by Jonathan Ali

Thu 23 Feb 18:10

### Film Wallahs: Kekee Manzil: House of Art

Fri 24 Feb 20:40

### Course: Filmmaking for Artists: Beginners Filmmaking Workshop

Sun 26 Feb 10:30-16:30

### Relaxed Screening: Throne of Blood (Kumonosu-jô) + intro and discussion

Mon 27 Feb 18:15

## IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

### Chinese New Year: Year of the Rabbit: What About China? + intro by Hyun Jin Cho, BFI London Film Festival Programmer

Sun 5 Feb 14:30

### BFI Expanded: Shifting Perspectives: A focus on Female and Non-Binary creators in XR

6-12 Feb

### Mark Kermode Live in 3D at the BFI

Mon 6 Feb 18:30

### UK Premiere: Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman + intro with director Pierre Földes

Mon 6 Feb 20:45

### Preview: Joyland + Q&A

Wed 8 Feb 18:00

### Spike Lee in Conversation

Mon 13 Feb 18:15

### Summer of Sam + Introduction by Spike Lee

Mon 13 Feb 20:35

### BFI Future Film Festival

16-19 Feb

### Preview: Subject + Q&A with director Camilla Hall and contributor Margaret Ratliff

Fri 17 Feb 18:10

### Preview: The Strays + Q&A

Mon 20 Feb 18:15

---

## 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](https://www.bfi.org.uk/join)

## 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](https://www.player.bfi.org.uk)

## SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with Sight and Sound, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25\*

\* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info: [sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk](https://sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk)

**SIGHT AND SOUND**

Join the BFI mailing list for regular programme updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account at [www.bfi.org.uk/signup](https://www.bfi.org.uk/signup)

---

Programme notes and credits compiled by Sight and Sound and the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email [prognotes@bfi.org.uk](mailto:prognotes@bfi.org.uk)

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