



NEW RELEASES

God's Creatures

This gripping and atmospheric Irish psychological drama asks how far you might go to protect someone you love, even if they were accused of something unforgivable. In a windswept fishing town on the Irish coast, factory worker Aileen's days are brightened when, out of the blue, her prodigal son Brian returns home, after seven long years living abroad. However, her joy is cut short when one of her co-workers accuses Brian of sexual assault, creating divisions in the town's close-knit community and within Aileen herself.

Emily Watson, Paul Mescal and Aisling Franciosi, who each garnered British Independent Film Award nominations, deliver devastating performances. Saela Davis and Anna Rose's gripping, beautifully shot and richly scored film is wracked with tension and dread.

Kimberley Sheehan, Events Programmer, bfi.org.uk

Powered by quietly intense performances and incisive, exquisite filmmaking, *God's Creatures* enters the life of a small, windswept Irish fishing village and a family whose bonds are as tumultuous as the sea upon which their survival depends. From those relentless elements emerges a gripping story, epic in its moral dimensions. The tale begins as Brian O'Hara returns home to his family's hardscrabble oyster farm after seven estranged years abroad. But a mother's answered prayer becomes her cross to bear. When Brian is accused of a terrible crime, his mother, Aileen, instinctively lies to protect him. Self-sacrifice and defense of one's own define her maternal identity. As the consequences ripple through the village and tensions long left unspoken bubble to the surface, the film reveals a mother's stoic devotion and its tragic undoing.

Few sons ever reappear in this coastal village of fading opportunity. It's a place haunted by acts never accounted for, secrets never told, apologies never uttered – by memories as restless and unsettled as apparitions. It's also a place of stark self-preservation, where the local fishermen purposely refuse to learn to swim, despite the constant perils of drowning, lest they be obligated to risk their lives to rescue others. Aileen is overjoyed to see her prodigal son come home to revive the family business, no matter how precarious. She watches with pleasure as he falls back into the elemental rhythms of the tides and the balm of hard work. But when the police inform her that Brian is suspected of sexually assaulting her factory co-worker, it is Aileen who finds herself in an accelerating nightmare. Caught between love, shame, and the urge to protect what little she has in the world, Aileen must reckon with the silence and denial that have long held sway in the village.

Directing partners Saela Davis and Anna Rose Holmer weave a poetic tapestry of intersecting relationships: mother and son, past and present, humanity and nature. They tell a story of reckoning that feels of a piece with the craggy mercilessness and dark wit of the Irish coast. They bring a unique vision that is tender and unflinching, at once authentic to the place and alive with rich, luminous color – a vision that takes the story full circle to two defining moments: one of harrowing surrender and another of affirming

reclamation. The directors were captivated by the achingly beautiful screenplay by Shane Crowley. But most of all they were drawn to Aileen.

‘Aileen really moved us because she felt like someone we’d not experienced before in this way. We saw an opportunity to deconstruct and re-imagine the archetype of a mother constrained to the role of bystander by placing her at the centre of our narrative,’ says Davis. Continues Holmer, ‘It was Aileen’s story, her psychology, and her change of heart that inspired us to make a film where the lives of the women in particular are full and thorough, where their interior lives are as cinematic as those sweeping vistas.’

God’s Creatures began as the story does – with the implacable sea. It was the film’s producer, Fodhla Cronin O’Reilly, who first had the notion of looking beneath the maritime charm of an Irish fishing village to the moral complications of the lives within. She grew up in such a fishing village in Kerry, on Ireland’s tempestuous west coast. ‘I wanted to tell a story about the world I came from,’ she says, ‘about the hardships of local fishermen against the cruel sea and how this landscape of crashing waves can make humble lives feel epic. In this primal landscape that seemed to hold us all captive, a disagreement over oyster licenses can carry the stakes of a grand territorial conflict. Here, the mundane and the ordinary seem to stretch into the realm of myth.’

Cronin O’Reilly took a chance on a screenwriter for the project: Shane Crowley, a childhood friend from a neighboring town in Kerry. At the time, Crowley had no professional training, but his long, poetic emails about his travels captivated Cronin O’Reilly with their atmosphere and human insights. ‘I found Shane’s voice to be so lyrical and distinct,’ she says. The two began creating, sparking a process which blossomed into nearly a decade of script development. An idea came into sharp focus as they began to hear more and more stories about women across Ireland who had been disbelieved and effectively ostracised from tight knit communities after making allegations of sexual assault. ‘We were so dumbfounded as to how these women were being treated,’ says Cronin O’Reilly, ‘It felt like these women, women I grew up with, were having their voices stripped away from them just as I was beginning to find my own. I was compelled to use my voice to highlight these stories that require attention.’

They envisioned a story of a mother and son, and a lie that she tells to protect him when he is accused of sexual assault. ‘We wanted to explore male privilege through a mother and son relationship,’ says Crowley. Cronin O’Reilly continues, ‘And to explore the gender politics of our world. A story about the inner conflict of a mother torn between her unconditional love for her son and her own sense of right and wrong. It gave us the opportunity to investigate themes of gender, family, trauma, sexuality, desire, and emigration – and to ask the questions – how could people do this to sexual assault survivors, how could communities treat individuals like this?’

Production notes

GOD'S CREATURES

Directed by: Saela Davis, Anna Rose Holmer
©: LLC A24 Distribution, British Broadcasting Corporation, Nine Daughters, Screen Ireland
Production Company: Nine Daughters
With the support of: Western Region Audiovisual Producer's Fund/WRAP Fund
Presented by: A24, BBC Film, Screen Ireland
Executive Producers: Rose Garnett, Michael Wood, Celine Haddad, Sarah Dillon, Richard Mansell, Saela Davis, Anna Rose Holmer
Produced by: Fodhla Cronin O'Reilly
Line Producer: Emmet Fleming
Associate Producers: Jeffrey Penman, Rob Watson
Production Manager: Maria Mulhall
Production Co-ordinator: Christine Kelly
Production Accountants: Rob Quigley, Penny Robinson
Location Manager: Gordon Wycherley
Post-production Co-ordinator: Tayler Haynes
Production Assistant: Emmet Jones
1st Assistant Director: Andrew Mannion
Script Supervisor: Janet Kellock
Casting Director: Shaheen Baig
Script Editor: Sarah Golding
Screenplay by: Shane Crowley
Story by: Fodhla Cronin O'Reilly, Shane Crowley
Script Consultant: Angeli MacFarlane
Director of Photography: Chayse Irvin
2nd Unit Director of Photography: Iain Trimble
Focus Puller: Conor Hammond
Chief Lighting Technician: Andy Cole
Key Grip: John Foster
Stills and Specials Photographer: Enda Bowe
Visual Effects by: Assembly Post
Special Effects Supervisor: Brendan Byrne
Special Effects Services: Film FX Ireland
Editor: Jeanne Applegate, Julia Bloch
1st Assistant Editors: Leeda Yazdi, Conor Spelman
Production Designer: Inbal Weinberg
Art Director: Neill Treacy
Standby Art Director: Helen MacDermott
Set Decorator: Valerie Nolan
Graphic Designer: Rachael McCabe
Storyboard Artist: Darragh Scott
Prop Master: Chan Kin
Construction Manager: Colm Bassett
Costume Designers: Joan Bergin, Lara Campbell
Costume Supervisor: Mary Fox

Make-up Designer: Freddie Stopler
Make-up Artist: Edwina Kelly
Hair Designer: Niamh Glynn
Film Stock and Processing by: Kodak
Music by: Danny Bensi, Saunder Jurriaans
Music Supervisor: Juliette Martin
Music Mixed by: Phil McGowen
Dance Choreography: Des Bailey
Sound Designer: Chris Foster
Production Sound Mixer: Patrick Downey
Re-recording Mixer: Chris Foster
Supervising Sound Editor: Chris Foster
Dialogue Editor: Colin Alexander
Sound Effects Editor: Sanghee Moon
ADR Editor: Ruth Hernandez
Stunt Co-ordinator: Brendan Condren
Irish Language Consultant: Peadar Cox
Dialect Coach: Neil Swain
Animals Supply and Supervision: Eddie Drew

Cast

Emily Watson (*Aileen O'Hara*)
Paul Mescal (*Brian O'Hara*)
Aisling Franciosi (*Sarah Murphy*)
Declan Conlon (*Con O'Hara*)
Toni O'Rourke (*Erin O'Hara*)
Marion O'Dwyer (*Mary Fitz*)
Brendan McCormack (*Francie D'Arcy*)
Lalor Roddy (*Paddy O'Hara*)
Seán T. O'Meallaigh (*Nigel O'Connor*)
Steve Gunn (*Dennis Guiney*)
Leah Minto (*Sheila Breen*)
John Burke (*John Ferris*)
Enda Oates (*Dan Neil*)
Isabelle Connolly (*Emma Daly*)
Barry Barnes (*Patrolman Daragh West*)
Wendy Dynan Gleeson (*factory worker 2*)
Sarah Kinlen (*factory worker 3*)
Andrew Bennett (*Garda Mike*)
Philip O'Sullivan (*judge*)
Stephen Campbell, Manus Lunny,
Brian McCafferty (*musicians*)

Ireland/UK/USA 2022
100 mins

A BFI release

NEW RELEASES

Rye Lane

From Mon 27 Mar

1976

From Mon 27 Mar

God's Creatures

From Fri 31 Mar (Q&A with actors Emily Watson and Toni O'Rourke on Fri 31 Mar 18:10)

Sick of Myself

From Fri 21 Apr

RE-RELEASES

Dance Craze

From Mon 27 Mar

The Age of Innocence

From Fri 31 Mar

Top Hat

From 7 Apr

Raging Bull

From 14 Apr

Young Soul Rebels

From Fri 28 Apr

The Passion of Remembrance

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