



BE GAY DO CRIME: A SEASON OF QUEER CRIME FILMS

My Brother the Devil

My Brother the Devil

Directed by: Sally El Hosaini

©: Blood Brothers Films Ltd. (UK)

Production Companies:

Wild Horses Film Company,

Rooks Nest Entertainment

In association with Film Clinic

With additional support from: Sundance Institute,

Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, Babylon

Developed with the assistance of:

Rawi Screenwriters' Lab

Executive Producers: Mohamed Hefzy,

Sally El Hosaini

Producers: Gayle Griffiths, Julia Godzinskaya,

Michael Sackler

Line Producer: Michael S. Constable

Production Coordinator: Heather Brunt

Location Manager: Joe Kotroczo

Assistant Location Manager: Christopher Hutchins

Post-production Supervisor: Mark Harris

1st Assistant Directors: Alex Mercer, Karen Howard

1st Assistant Director (2nd Unit): Andrew McEwan

2nd Assistant Director: Joe Hornsey

Script Supervisor: Sara J. Doughty

Casting: Shaheen Baig, Aisha Walters

Written by: Sally El Hosaini

Script Consultant: Aymen Hamdouchi

Director of Photography: David Raedeker

2nd Unit Director of Photography:

Nick Gordon Smith

2nd Assistant Camera: Jon Britt

Focus Puller: Chris Kane

Gaffer: Max McGill

Opening Titles Photography: Simon Wheatley,

Nick Wall

Stills Photographers: Etienne Bol,

Edina Van Der Wyck

Visual Effects Supervisors: Dom Thomson,

Delores McGinley

Special Effects Supervisor: Scott MacIntyre

Editor: Iain Kitching

1st Assistant Editors: Immanuel Von Bennigsen,

Kevin Holt, Ben Coulson

Editing Consultant: Mamoun Hassan

Production Designer: Stéphane Collonge

Art Director: Pedro Moura

Assistant Art Director: Jamie Bishop

Graffiti Artist: Andrew Greenwood

Production Buyer: Melanie Light

Costume Designer: Rob Nicholls

Costume Supervisor: Lisa Mitton

Hair & Make-up Designer: Emma Slater

Key Make-Up Artist: Sophie Cox

Prosthetics Supplier: Paul Hyett

Digital Colourist: Paul Ensbj

Music by: Stuart Earl

Music Supervisors: Manners McDade,

Nicole Prutch

Sound Designer: Jovan Ajder

Sound Recordist: David Mitchell

2nd Boom Operator (Daily): Seb Blach

Sound Maintenance: Rebecca Morgan

Re-recording Mixers: Jovan Ajder, Samir Foco

Final Re-Recording Mixers: Graham Daniel,

Adam Daniel

Supervising Sound Editor: Jovan Ajder

Sound Editors: Sirma Dogan, Thomas Cohen

Dialogue Editor: Nikola Medic

FX Editor: Samir Foco

ADR Editors: Ruben Aguirre Barba, Peter Crooks

Foley Artists: Miodrag Jakovljevic, Ivan Uzelac

Foley Recordist: Nikola Kokotovic

Foley Editors: Slobodan Rajcic, Marko Stojanovic

Sally El Hosaini on 'My Brother the Devil'

Occasionally festival juries get it right. The award for Best British Newcomer at [the 2011] BFI London Film Festival went to writer-director Sally El Hosaini for *My Brother the Devil*, one of the most visually striking British debuts in recent times. It tells of two brothers of Egyptian descent growing up on a Hackney council estate. Elder brother Rashid (James Floyd) is mired in drug-dealing and local gang culture, but determined that younger brother Mo (Fady Elsayed) shouldn't follow suit, preferring him to focus on educational achievement as a way out. Mo has different ideas, of course, and further twists in the tale will place their patiently evoked fraternal bond under pressure.

I probably don't need to remind you of the numerous British horrors mining similar urban territory. Apart from skirting clichés, what El Hosaini brings to the table is a profound understanding of the dislocations often attendant on a mixed cultural heritage (she herself is half Egyptian); a concern for authenticity (particularly East London street argot) which doesn't fetishise or glamorise; a brilliantly chosen and directed cast of mainly non-professionals; and a sensitive figuring of turbulent interior lives through superb camera and sound work. It all adds up to a heartfelt film that lives and breathes.

What was the starting point for My Brother the Devil?

I'd lived in Hackney for over ten years, on the same council estate, and I'd seen a lot of change over that time. I wanted to do a film about two brothers, and because it looked like it was going to be micro micro micro-budget I thought, 'Well, I'll just set it on my council estate.' In the wake of the London bombings there was a lot of stuff in the press about Arabs and Muslims and a certain kind of image projected, and I thought, 'I really want to do the film that's not the terrorist film – that's a bit playful, that's actually showing the real things these kids are dealing with.'

The older brother Rashid is played by an actor, James Floyd, but the others are mainly non-professionals.

I met so many fascinating boys during my research and thought, 'Wow, they can really act. They could do better than an actor.' But I was really worried about casting an actor among non-actors. I wasn't able to find a real boy who was prepared to do the Rashid role. James really impressed me with the amount of hard work he put in just for the audition – it was miles more than anyone else had done. And I realised I needed someone who was going to be Method, and who was going to go and get to know the real guys. All I said to him was: 'Don't get arrested.'

What were you looking for when you chose your cinematographer?

With David [Raedeker] what I noticed was he allowed his camerawork to get messy for the performance. And I had seen other extremely talented cinematographers, but their work was so stunning that it was inaccessible. You almost didn't care about the characters because it was just too good. I really felt that [Raedeker] was someone who was going to allow space for the actors to blossom. When you're working with non-actors and young actors, it requires someone who's going to be much more spontaneous – in the moment and

Stunt Co-ordinator: Jason White
Armourer: Scott Macintyre
Animal Handlers: K9-FX Film Dogs, Mic Martin, Rob Burgess, Sonny St. Rose
Digital Intermediate by:
Technicolor Creative Services, Kim Honeyman
Digital Intermediate Editorial: Jamie Leonard
Digital Dailies Supervisor: Dan Mulligan
Digital Intermediate Consultant: Matt Adams
Studio: Shoreditch Studios, Wimbledon Studios
Cast:
Saïd Taghmaoui (*Sayyid*)
James Floyd (*Rashid*)
Fady Elsayed (*Mo*)
Aymen Hamdouchi (*Repo*)
Ashley Thomas (*Lenny*)
Anthony Welsh (*Izzi*)
Arnold Oceng (*AJ*)
Letitia Wright (*Aisha*)
Amira Ghazalla (*Hanan*)
Elarica Gallacher (*Vanessa*)
Nasser Memarzia (*Abdul-Aziz*)
Shyam Kelly (*Devonte*)
McKell Celaschi-David (*Demon's boy*)
Zachary Scipio (*Demon's younger*)
Ryan Townsend (*Demon's younger 2*)
Malachi Kirby (*J-Boy*)
Kemi Martin (*J-Boy's girl*)
Mohammed Mansary (*Faisal*)
Denzel Assiamah (*Bobo*)
Yusra Warsama (*Sonya*)
Aaron Ishmael (*Jamie*)
Savannah Gordon-Liburd (*Hackney girl*)
Leemore Marrett Jr (*Demon*)
Naresh Bhana (*tattoo artist*)
Kirsty Todd (*tattoo parlour receptionist*)
Nicola Harrison (*secretary*)
George Oliver (*crackhead*)
Frieda Thiel (*Kayla*)
Michael-Joel David Stuart (*DMG Younger 2*)
Sylvia Amanquah (*junkie mum*)
Ebony White (*Jamaican granny*)
UK 2012©
111 mins

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responding, not coming at it with a very dogmatic 'This is the shot' or 'This light has moved two inches because an actor kicked it.' I needed that more flexible way.

What else were you looking to achieve visually in the film?

Our main rule was that the shooting style would be subjective, so whenever we composed shots of the brothers we would always be thinking about the experience of that moment through the five senses. The other big decision that affected the aesthetic was to shoot in Scope. When I was shopping the script around trying to raise money, something a lot of people said to me was, 'Oh, it's set on a Hackney council estate. OK, we know what that film is.' Well actually, no. Because have you been to Hackney? Have you been on a council estate? There's actually grass – they're not that bad; there's sky, there's flowers, there's trees. What I realised was that there was this whole thing of outsiders making films looking in, and I thought if there's one aspiration I have, it's for this film to be from the inside looking out. That matched up with our ambition to be very subjective. So we realised that we should make this film an adventure rather than mundane, and Scope made it that – because you're suddenly applying a different way of looking at a world that we're used to seeing on TV screens.

It lifts your film into another dimension.

And also it allowed us to be very intimate, because you're forced into all these close-ups with Scope. And the actors had better be completely honest, because they're going to show up if they're not.

Your own background clearly informs your depiction of the brothers and their family.

In a way Rashid has become the dad that his father can't be, because the parents are so out of touch – because they literally come from another world. They don't actually understand the world their sons inhabit. Their sons are living this split because there's them outside, navigating the world, and there's them at home. A lot of Arab people living in the West will identify with that split personality.

Interview by Kieron Corless, *Sight and Sound*, December 2012