



JOANNA HOGG: INFLUENCES

Margaret

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Directed by: Kenneth Lonergan

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Camelot Pictures, Dune Entertainment III LLC,
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Production Companies: Gilbert Films,
Mirage Enterprises, Scott Rudin

Presented by: Fox Searchlight Pictures,
Camelot Pictures

Executive Producer: Anthony Minghella

Produced by: Sydney Pollack, Gary Gilbert,
Scott Rudin

Co-producer: Blair Breard

Unit Production Managers: Blair Breard,
Jennifer Roth

Production Supervisor: David Bausch

Production Co-ordinator: Anita Sum

Post-production Accountant: Lisa Cofini

Location Manager: Michael Fucci

2nd Unit Director: Manny Siverio

1st Assistant Director: Todd Pfeiffer

2nd Assistant Director: Colin MacLellan

2nd 2nd Assistant Director: Sarah Rae Garrett

Script Supervisor: Massoumeh Emami

Casting by: Douglas Aibel

Casting Associate: Stephanie Holbrook

Extras Casting by: Sylvia Fay

Voice Casting: Sondra James

Written by: Kenneth Lonergan

Director of Photography: Ryszard Lenczewski

Camera Operator: Lukasz Jogalla

Steadicam Operators: Stephen Cosentino

Will Arnot

1st Assistant Camera: George Hennah

2nd Assistant Camera: David Flanigan

Gaffer: Michael Marzovilla

Key Grip: Tom Kerwick

Video Assist: Rico Alston

Still Photographers: Ken Regan, James Bridges

Visual Effects and Title Design: Big Film Design

Visual Effects Supervisor (Big Film Design):

Randall Balsmeyer

Special Effects Co-ordinator: Conrad Brink Sr

Edited by: Anne McCabe, Michael Fay,

Martin Scorsese *, Thelma Schoonmaker *

Assistant Editors: Dave Smith, Matthew Booras,

Anita Gabrosek, Matt Mayer, James Harrison,

Daniel Triller, Mike Selemón

Production Designer: Dan Leigh

Art Director: James Donahue

Art Department Co-ordinator: Russell Barnes

Set Decorator: Ron Von Blomberg

Leadman: Guido De Curtis

Scenic Artist: Rosalie Russino

Storyboard Artist: Patrick Campbell

Property Master: Sabrina Wright

Construction Co-ordinator: John Ciccimarro

Costume Designer: Melissa Toth

Assistant Costume Designer: Leah Katznelson

Costume Supervisor: Melissa Adzima-Stanton

Make-up Artist: Felice Diamond

Hair Stylist: Peg Schierholz

Opticals by: Jesse Morrow

Lab: New York Technicolor

Colour Timer: Don Ciana

Negative Cutters: Stan Sztaba, Patricia Sztaba

Music by: Nico Muhly

Music Supervisor: Nic Ratner

Music Production Co-ordinator: Christian Rutledge

Music Editor: Nic Ratner

Music Recorded and Mixed by: Dan Bora

Music Preparation: Trevor Gureckis

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

During one of the blistering wars of words that are *Margaret*'s lifeblood, a character issues the sour reprimand: 'Don't handle me.' Perhaps no film in recent memory can claim to have been 'handled' more than Kenneth Lonergan's long delayed, much tinkered-with New York saga, which at last emerges following a traumatic six years of about turns, back and forth lawsuits and protracted surgery from a queue of edit doctors. The version that now sees the light of day, pruned to a studio-stipulated 150 minutes after a final polish by Martin Scorsese and Thelma Schoonmaker, is as electrifying as it is occasionally wearying.

Shot in 2005, *Margaret* is a palpable artefact of Bush-era America, its study of thwarted ideals and fateful solipsism unfolding in a city still in gradual recovery from epochal tragedy. From the arresting opening shots of packed throngs of Manhattanites strolling in ultra slow motion, the air is fraught, the tone brittle. Soon enough, Upper West Side teenager Lisa Cohen (Anna Paquin) playfully distracts a bus driver (Mark Ruffalo) to such an extent that he skips a red light and runs over a pedestrian. In a painfully vivid sequence, the woman dies in Lisa's arms; confused and feeling pangs of responsibility, Lisa lies to the police that the light was green, absolving the driver – who sheepishly reaffirms her statement – of blame. Lonergan proceeds from this tortuous poser (who exactly is culpable?) by giving Lisa a burning interior conflict that has ultimately far-reaching consequences. Her gnawing urge to talk about the accident's ramifications is kept frustratingly unfulfilled: her single mother Joan (an excellent J. Smith-Cameron), a stage actress, is too busy with her imminent Broadway opening; her preoccupied father relays vague advice down the phone from California. The most attentive listener is Matt Damon's sincere but naive geometry teacher, with whom Lisa ill-advisedly begins a flirtation.

Brilliantly played by Paquin, Lisa is a terrific, maddening creation – prickly and defensive, headstrong but vulnerable. When she tries to find someone, or something, to blame for the accident beside herself, her misguided idealism takes a battering from the grey moral compromises of adult reality. 'I don't want to make this my own moral gymnasium,' she says, quoting Bernard Shaw. As written by Lonergan, it's an assault course. The elusiveness of doing the right thing equally suffused Lonergan's debut *You Can Count on Me* (2000), but compared with that film's subtle evasions, *Margaret* is unapologetically bold. The messy, prolonged rows between people blue in the face from being misunderstood or failing to communicate recall Cassavetes, but there's a heightened, sometimes theatrical quality to Lonergan's bracing dialogue. Opera and literature are knowingly alluded to. *Margaret*'s title derives from Gerard Manley Hopkins's poem 'Spring and Fall' (recited, along with pointed excerpts from *King Lear*, by Matthew Broderick's English professor), detailing a girl's loss of innocence when faced with grief and the darkness in the world at large. It's a rather blunt literary proxy for Lisa, but it might also double for New York itself post-2001. A potent sense of performance lingers: glimpses of Joan's stage career; Lisa's acrimonious school debates where students scream at each other about 9/11 and Afghanistan; Joan's numerous opera visits with her would-be suitor Ramon (Jean Reno).

Sound Design and Supervision: Jacob Ribicoff
Additional Sound Design: Paul Hsu
Production Sound Mixer: Michael Barosky
Boom Person: Laurel Ann Bridges
Re-recording Mixer: Reilly Steele
Supervising Dialogue Editor: Dan Korintus
Dialogue Editor: Eliza Paley
Stunt Co-ordinator: Manny Siverio
Dolby Sound Consultant: Eric Vierhaus
Dialect Coach for Jean Reno: Patricia Fletcher
Unit Publicist: Eric Myers
Cast:

Anna Paquin (*Lisa Cohen*)
J. Smith-Cameron (*Joan*)
Jean Reno (*Ramon*)
Jeannie Berlin (*Emily*)
Allison Janney (*Monica Patterson*)
Matthew Broderick (*John*)
Kieran Culkin (*Paul*)
Mark Ruffalo (*Maretti*)
Matt Damon (*Mr Aaron*)
Sarah Steele (*Becky*)
John Gallagher Jr (*Darren*)
Cyrus Hernstadt (*Curtis*)
Stephen Adly Guirgis (*Mitchell*)
Betsy Aidem (*Abigail*)
Adam Rose (*Anthony*)
Nick Grodin (*Matthew*)
Jonathan Hadary (*Deutsch*)
Josh Hamilton (*Victor*)
Rosemarie DeWitt (*Mrs Maretti*)
Glenn Fleshler (*1st man*)
Stephen Conrad Moore (*2nd man*)
Gio Perez (*kid*)
Jake O'Connor (*David*)
David Mazouz (*Lionel*)
Jerry Matz (*Mr Klein*)
Kevin Carroll (*Mr Lewis*)
Hina Abdullah (*Angie*)
Olivia Thirlby (*Monica*)
Kenneth Lonergan (*Karl*)
Enid Graham (*Bonnie*)
Brittany Underwood (*Leslie*)
T. Scott Cunningham (*Gary*)
Michael Ealy (*Dave the lawyer*)
Renée Fleming (*opera singer*)
Susan Graham (*opera singer 2*)
Adam Lefevre (*Rob*)
Matthew Bush (*Kurt*)
Anna Berger (*neighbourhood lady 1*)
Rose Arrick (*neighbourhood lady 2*)
Pippen Parker (*opera fan*)
Stephanie Cannon (*woman mourner 1*)
Kevin Geer (*AIG detective 2*)
Kelly Wolf (*Annette*)
Johann Carlo (*neighbour*)
Carlo Alban (*Rodrigo*)
Christine Goerke (*opera singer 'Norma'*)
Liza Colón-Zayas (*nurse*)
Yves Abel (*'Hoffmann' conductor*)
USA 2008©
150 mins
Digital

* Uncredited

Margaret's most extraordinary scene – a tearful reconciliation during a performance of *The Tales of Hoffmann* – might easily have been risibly phoney, but I found it totally apposite to the film's singular dramatic register. There are intermittent signs of production travails – certain scenes are a little broken-backed or overly baggy, subplots can feel half-developed, and some characters seem to have lost major screen time (Damon especially). Nevertheless, in its present form, Lonergan's magnum opus is an engrossing sprawl – a resonant work of novelistic breadth and often scalding power.

Matthew Taylor, *Sight and Sound*, February 2012

On 30 September 2011, six years after shooting started, Kenneth Lonergan's *Margaret* opened in 12 US cities. It played for all of five weeks, and grossed \$46,495 in return for its \$12.4 million budget. *Margaret* is 150 minutes of remarkable storytelling in which every character has equally compelling and (in)defensible reasons for their actions. Unfortunately the lawsuits arising out of the making of *Margaret* – arguably as complicated as those depicted on screen – dominated the critical reception of Lonergan's film.

For *Margaret*, Lonergan secured editorial carte blanche from co-financiers Gary Gilbert's Camelot Pictures and Fox Searchlight. With one caveat: the final cut couldn't exceed two hours. As a rule of thumb, one page of script equates to one minute of screen time; Mark Ruffalo claims the original script was 186 pages, while actress Olivia Thirlby says 300 pages were filmed during a three-month shoot that started in September 2005. Whatever the length of the script, even when Lonergan's contract was renegotiated to allow for a 150-minute final cut, he wouldn't countenance anything under three hours. Gilbert claimed he gave Lonergan approximately 16 post-production extensions, a claim denied by the director's lawyer.

By summer 2007 the money had run out and *Margaret* was still incomplete. Lonergan kept cutting, taking a loan from an old friend, actor Matthew Broderick, to keep working. After Gilbert had the original editors Anne McCabe and Michael Pay put together a two-hour cut while Lonergan was on vacation, the director banned them from working on the film. Fox Searchlight then sued Gilbert for failing to pay his half of the budget; he counter-sued, and the parties settled out of court. By the time *Margaret* was eventually released, at least six editors had taken a whack at it. The final Lonergan-approved cut – by Martin Scorsese and his editor Thelma Schoonmaker – clocks in at 149 minutes and 40 seconds, just fulfilling the terms of his contract.

Fox Searchlight gave the film almost no publicity on its US release in October: despite releasing it in Chicago, they didn't even send *Chicago Sun-Times* film critic Roger Ebert an invitation to the one and only press screening. No one will comment, but it all looks very much like a studio burying a film to punish its maker for hubris. *Margaret* deserves better.

Vadim Rizov, *Sight and Sound*, January 2012

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